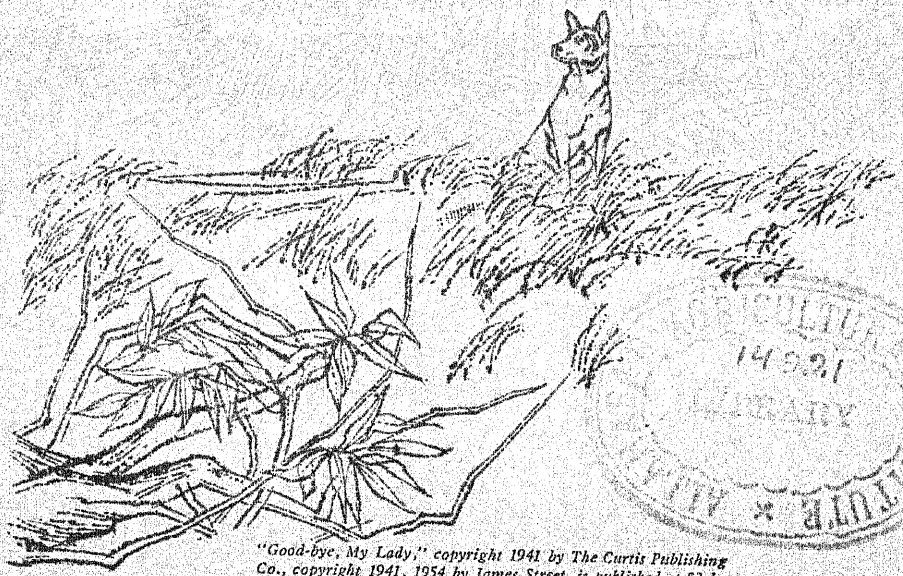


Illustrations by Joseph Bertelli

Good-bye, My Lady

A condensation of the book by

JAMES STREET



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Shiftless and *no-account*—that was how people who lived by the rules described Uncle Jesse. And the way he brought up the boy, Skeeter, was a disgrace! But the old man realized the importance of mutual respect and confidence between a boy and his elders. He understood, too, the depth of the boy's love for Lady, the queer little dog he had found in the swamp.

When the time came for Skeeter to make an agonizing decision, Uncle Jesse offered no advice. "Whichever way you jump, I'm jumping with you," he said. The way Skeeter jumped was the answer to Uncle Jesse's prayers, for it was plain to see that the boy would one day be "a fitting man."

There are humor, excitement and emotion in this story of the Mississippi swamplands—not to mention some revealing insights into the painful, wonderful process of growing up.

"It is a rich and beautiful book . . . moving and eloquent and touching by turns."

—Harnett T. Kane, author of *Lady of Arlington* and *Deep Delta Country*

"Fundamentally an American classic, written with a simplicity and gentleness that conceal the art of the author."

—Houston *Chronicle*

CHAPTER 1

THE SWAMP was sleeping the night away, but the boy was wide awake as he sat on the steps of the cabin and listened to the moonlight rhythm of things—the swish of the river around the cypress knees, the hum of insects, the low rumblings of the bullfrogs and the high cries of the wildcats.

A bull alligator bellowed up beyond the bend of the river and another answered from the sand bar down the river and the boy judged their hiding places, for they were things to be hunted and sold.

Then he heard what he was waiting for: a haunting laugh that echoed across the bog and startled all the night creatures into silence, and then the swamp lay as still as unborn time. The boy got to his feet and stepped noiselessly into the shadow of the cabin and waited with the patience that comes with living in a wilderness of water and trees. Then it came again: a chuckling yodel that drifted off into a sob and ended in a weird "gro-oo-o."

He called softly through the cabin door, "Uncle Jesse."

The old man sat upright in his bed. "That you, Skeeter? How come you ain't asleep?"

"Heard it again, Uncle Jesse."

"'Magination," the old man snorted.

"But I heard it plain as day. This side the river."

The old man swung his feet over the side of the bed and reached for his lantern and lit it. He put on his shoes and pants and slipped on his denim jacket. The boy felt in the corner by the door for the double-edged axe. Wished he had a shotgun. A .20-gauge. "Let's get going while the moon's out," he said.

Uncle Jesse reached over his bed and took down his gun, a

single-barreled .12-gauge, and broke it and put in a shell, and then he lifted the lantern and walked out into the night.

Skeeter followed him. "Over that way." He nodded toward the river. "Heard it plain as day. Like a ghost laughing. Only it wasn't scary."

The old man grunted and set off down the path in long strides, his eyes to the ground in search of snakes, particularly the deadly cottonmouth moccasins that came out of the swamp and hunted along the path. The boy was about three paces behind him and he, too, was watching for snakes. The briers were of no concern. The thick calluses of his bare feet took care of that.

He held the axe close to the head and in his left hand. Yes sir-ree, bob-tail. Wished he had a shotgun. A little old .20-gauge. Cost twenty-five dollars, though. Get one next year, maybe, if they sold enough cordwood or cypress knees or alligator hides or any of the things that he and old Jesse Jackson got from the swamp and sold in town.

They reached the east bank of the Pascagoula, the muddy river that drains the swamp and flows into the Gulf of Mexico in the southern part of Mississippi. The river was low and deep within its banks, for summer was upon the land.

Uncle Jesse and Skeeter moved so silently that the swamp creatures were not disturbed and soon their sounds were at crescendo again. The breeze was from the south, from the Gulf of Mexico, and it was a fat wind, a damp one.

"Heard it up ahead, like you said?" Uncle Jesse asked.

"Right up yonder. Dead ahead."

"Downwind from us now. Smell us sure." Uncle Jesse set the lantern on the ground. "Mout as well rest a little bit. Can't hunt nothing and it downwind."

They waited. The river was slapping the cypress knees and suddenly the haunting laugh came again, and was close. The boy's eyes were wide and staring. "That's it."

Uncle Jesse's mouth sagged open and he felt for his shotgun. "Great day in the mawnin'. What is it?"

"No telling." The boy moved closer to the old man and gripped his axe. "Been hearing it every night for a week."

The wind veered to the east and Uncle Jesse snatched up his lantern and the shotgun. "Come on."

The clouds separated wide from the moon and the swamp was dappled in shadows except in a clearing by the river and there the light was mellow and without shadows. Uncle Jesse stopped, stock-still, and doused his lantern and held up his hand. He said not a word, but pointed toward the clearing.

Then Skeeter saw it and his heart pounded hard. The animal was clearly visible in the moonlight and was sitting on its haunches, and its head was cocked sideways and it laughed. It was a merry little chuckle, a rather melodious sound that came high like a yodel and then trailed off into a gurgling sob.

"Wonder what it is?" Uncle Jesse peered at the creature. He had no intention of shooting unless attacked.

"Dog," the boy whispered. "Looks like a little bloodhound whose mama was a fox terrier or something."

"Looka yonder. Licking itself. Like a cat. Don't no dog lick itself."

"That dog does."

The old man and the boy watched the creature as it washed itself and then lifted its nose to the moon and chuckled. It was about a foot and a half high. Its coat was red and silky and there was a blaze of white down the chest and a circle of white around the throat. The face was wrinkled and sad.

"Can't no dog laugh." Uncle Jesse shook his head.

"That dog can," Skeeter said. "I aim to catch it."

"Don't make sense. Laughing like a young'un and licking itself like a cat. Ain't natural."

The animal lowered its nose and faced them, cocking its head from one side to the other. "Smells us," Skeeter whispered.

"Can't nothing smell that far, even downwind."

The animal crouched and braced and lifted its nose, and whipped it into the wind and froze to a point. Then it darted away, racing like a greyhound into the swamp.

"Be John Brown," Uncle Jesse said. "It did smell us. Can't nothing smell that far, but that thing did."

"Run like greased lightning, too. Watcha think, Uncle Jesse?"

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The old man scratched his neck, rasping his calloused fingers against the sunburned skin. "It ain't natural. Like a cross between a dog and a cat, and dogs and cats ain't supposed to cross. Mout as well go home. That thing is heading for the tall timber."

"Going to let it outsmart us?" Skeeter was disappointed. "I sort of figured on catching it."

"How you aim to catch something that can smell a mile and run like a scared rabbit?" Uncle Jesse picked up his lantern. "That thing's a freak. Maybe got loose from a circus or something. I aim to ask ol' Cash about it."

He began moving back down the path, and the boy caught up with him. "Sort of hate to let Mister Cash in on it."

"Ol' Cash is sharp as a brier. Knows something about everything, ol' Cash does."

"My hind leg!" the boy exclaimed. "All he knows is buy low and sell high."

The old man put his hand on Skeeter's head and tousled the long yellow hair. "Now, Skeeter, don't you go running down ol' Cash. Best storekeeper in these parts. Friend, too. Sold us that saw on time, and been carrying us plum' nigh a year."

Jesse owed Cash for more than supplies. The villagers of Lystra, where Cash owned the crossroads store, might have tried to take Skeeter away from the illiterate old swamper and send him to an orphanage, but for Cash Evans. They doubted if Jesse Jackson were fitting to rear a boy. They thought him shiftless and no-account. He had lived all of his sixty years in the swamp and his ways were a torment to people who believed that life must be lived by their rules.

But when there had been talk of sending Skeeter away, Cash had said, "Nothing shaking. That boy is a swamp sprout and ol' Jesse is a swamp hickory and they belong together like seed and burr. Leave 'em be."

The boy's mother was Jesse's sister and had died when he was a baby. His father, an Alabama trapper, had drifted into the swamp and drifted out again when his wife died. And so for twelve years, since he was two and so little Uncle Jesse had called him Skeeter, he had lived with Jesse Jackson in the one-room

cabin by the river. Now the boy had grown into a willowy swamp sprout with tangled yellow hair that Uncle Jesse cut maybe once or twice a year. He had freckles, too, and his real name was Claude.

Jesse earned a little money selling the things that he got from the swamp, but mostly he spent his days paddling around the bayous and teaching Skeeter the things that he thought were important. He was wise in the ways of swamps and animals. He didn't know much else.

Cash had insisted that Uncle Jesse send the boy to school in town when the roads were passable, but that wasn't regular. Skeeter knew almost nothing about life beyond the swamp and had heard only vaguely of such great places as New Orleans and Memphis and Mobile.

WHEN THEY got home, Skeeter followed Uncle Jesse into the cabin and Uncle Jesse lit the lamp and blew out his lantern and sat on his bed and yawned and stretched. "Did I laugh at your story, I'm rightly sorry. Had no call to laugh at you."

"Maybe I'll go out and get that thing." Skeeter tried to make his words sound casual.

"How you aim to catch it?"

Skeeter leaned back in his chair, balancing it on its hind legs as the old man so often did. "It's a dog. And a dog goes with a man. Heard you say so many a time. Cat goes with a place, but a dog goes with a man."

"Maybe you aim to whistle it up."

"No, sir. I aim to take food out to the swamp and just wait. Be obliged if you'll let me cook up a slab of middlin' meat."

Uncle Jesse went to the shelf and took down the meat and cut off a hunk. "Reckon that'll do it?"

"Yes, sir." Skeeter went to the wood box behind the cookstove and selected a few prime fat splinters to start the fire in the stove. They blazed quickly and he added a few sticks of stovewood and set the meat on the fire to boil.

Shadows danced in the cabin and on the meager possessions of an old man and a growing boy: two beds with cotton blankets and no sheets, the eating table of pine and the two chairs of

hickory, the gun, the axe and the lantern. Against the wall near the cookstove were propped a sack of flour and a sack of corn meal, and over the stove was a shelf on which were kept sugar and salt and coffee, a can of baking powder, a bucket of lard and a can of milk. They used canned milk instead of keeping a cow, for they were hunting folks and not farmers. Three times a week Skeeter rowed their skiff across the river and bought buttermilk from the Watsons, who were Negroes and whose eldest son, named Gates Watson, had been away to school. The Watsons were good farmers and had cows.

Uncle Jesse propped his elbows on his knees and cupped his chin in his hands and watched the boy sitting there by the stove and was sad that Skeeter was sprouting up. Soon his voice would go deeper into his throat and his lean arms would bunch into muscles at his shoulders and the cabin would be too small for him, and maybe the swamp, and then he would run to the wing and fly away. The thought of it made the old man sad.

The boy reached into a box on the hearth and spilled out some hickory nuts and began cracking them. "Like a few hicker' nuts?"

"Reckon not," the old man said. He could not chew hickory nuts, being without teeth.

Skeeter selected the best of the kernels and mashed them to a pulp and handed the treat to the old man and Uncle Jesse took it without a word, and relished it. Someday, somehow, he was going to buy him a set of store-bought teeth — Roebuckers, he called them. But Roebuckers, even the cheapest kind, cost sixty-five dollars, and it might as well have been a million.

"Someday," he said, "I'm going to walk right into ol' Cash's store and lay that money right on the counter and tell Cash to order me them Roebuckers. Then I'm going to eat me a bait of hicker' nuts, and enough roastin' ears to kill a goat. Maybe I can get me some Roebuckers with a couple of gold teeth in 'em."

Skeeter set the boiling meat to the back of the stove. "I'm getting sleepy," he said. He took off his jeans and threw them across his bed and crawled under the blanket.

Uncle Jesse blew out the lamp and then he, too, stretched out on his bed. "Good night, boy."

"Good night, Uncle Jesse."

"Say your prayers?"

"Saying them when you said good night."

For a minute the room was in stillness and then the boy asked, "Whatcha pray for, Uncle Jesse? Them Roebuckers?"

"Mostly." The old man didn't want to tell him, "I pray for you." It was not the thing to tell a boy.

"Reckon I pray for a shotgun I might get it?"

"Mout'n."

"Then reckon I pray that I catch that thing out in the swamp I might catch it?"

"Mout'n."

"Do I pray for both what about that?"

"Too much praying. That's how come folks get theirselves in a mess. Don't never crowd the Lord, boy."

Again the room was quiet and both were thinking of the things they wanted: the old man that the boy would grow up and be a fitting man and that he himself might have a set of store-bought teeth; and the boy that he could catch the strange creature he had seen. And maybe a .20-gauge shotgun. He didn't know which he wanted most. He just didn't know.

CHAPTER 2

THE BOY woke up before daybust. He sat upright and his eyes popped open and he swung to the side of the bed and felt for his trousers and for his shirt and then he was dressed.

Uncle Jesse was breathing a medley of snores and this terrible thought came to the boy: Uncle Jesse might sleep for another hour and he must sit there and wait.

He wished the wind would rattle a window or that a mouse would fiddle around the pots and pans, even a big schooner bug — anything to wake up Uncle Jesse. He wished he could sneeze a pure D genuine sneeze; Uncle Jesse would spot a playlike sneeze.

He flounced on the bed and crawled to the window and looked up at the element, as he called the sky. Nothing was stirring and

the darkness was mist-heavy and clammy. He rested his chin on the window sill and was dejected by the slowness of time.

"Can't hurry morn gloam." Uncle Jesse's voice filled the room and yet it was not loud.

"You awake? Didn't go to wake you up." But the boy was glad and he jumped from his bed and went over to the stove and set aside the boiled meat and put some wood on the fire. "I'll fix breakfast."

Uncle Jesse sat on the edge of his bed. "Put a little water in the coffeepot. About a dipperful."

"Need mor'n a dipper. Sort of aiming on having me a good hot cup of coffee this morning."

"One dipper," Uncle Jesse said.

Skeeter did not argue but went to the porch and got the water and poured it into the coffeepot and Uncle Jesse watched him. "Little bit more won't hurt," the old man said. He pulled on his shirt and trousers, and went over to the table and sat down.

The boy put in three dippers of water and put the coffeepot directly over the flame. He cut the rind off a slab of bacon because Uncle Jesse could not chew the rind and put the meat in the pan. He broke four eggs into a bowl and beat them and when the bacon was ready he cooked the eggs in the grease.

He poured Uncle Jesse's coffee and the old man emptied some in his saucer and blew on it and then he scraped back his chair and walked over to the shelf and got a coffee cup and a saucer and put them by the boy's plate. He filled the cup half full of coffee and went back to his chair and sat down.

"Smells good." The boy raised the cup to his lips.

"Put some cream in." Uncle Jesse pushed the can of condensed milk across the table.

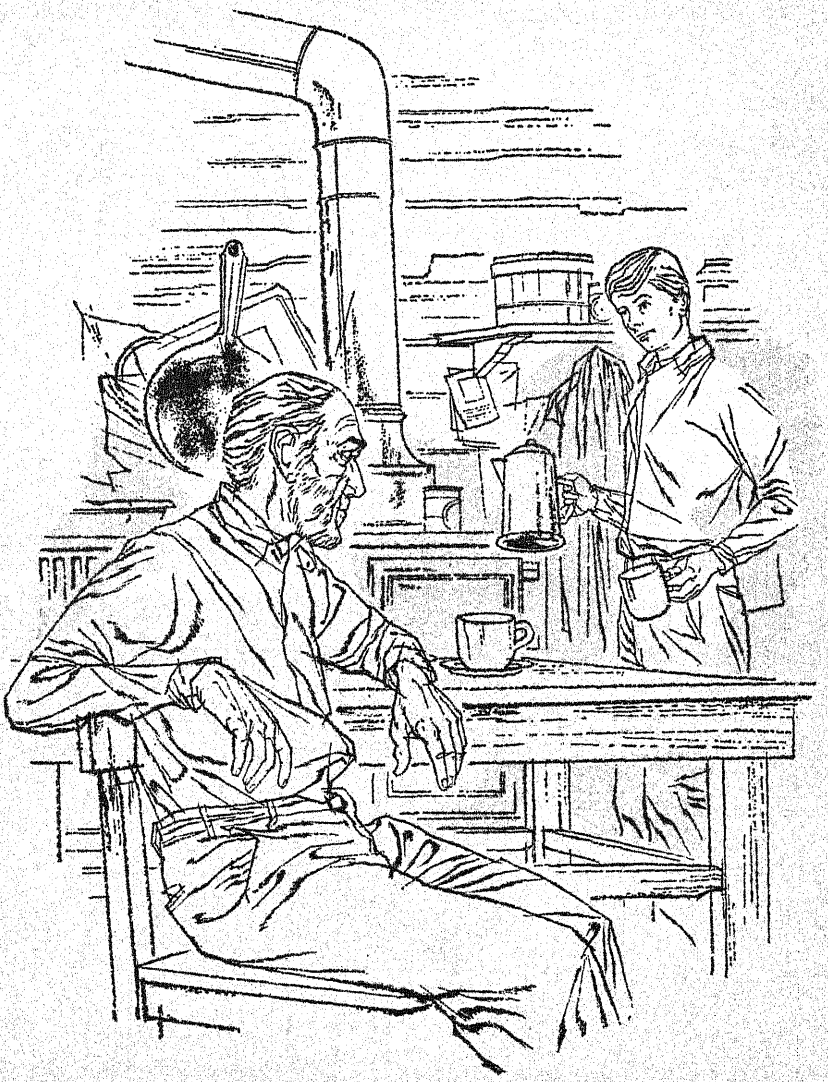
Skeeter tilted the can and spilled a few drops into his coffee.

"Ain't enough," Uncle Jesse said. " 'Bout half and half."

"You drink yours black."

"That's different."

Skeeter stirred more milk into his cup and then poured the coffee into his saucer and blew on it and tasted it. It was very bitter. "Pretty good coffee," he said. He crossed his legs again



and took another swallow. "Yes, sir, nothing like a good cup of coffee and it coming daybust."

The old man filled his pipe. "Morn gloam be here t'reckly. You aiming to go out after that thing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't take no chances."

"Just a dog."

"Dogs go mad. And be they mad they'll jump you."

"I'll be watching."

"You want my gun?"

"If you don't mind."

"You know how to tote it. Safety on. Keep it pointed toward the ground — "

"And don't climb a fence with it loaded." Skeeter had heard the instructions many times but never before had he gone out alone with the gun.

"That gun's a single barrel. Won't get but one shot."

"Ain't aiming to shoot," Skeeter said.

"If you have to shoot and happen to miss, then grab yourself a stick and start hollering. Don't try to run. Don't turn your back on that thing."

The boy nodded and began stacking the dishes.

"I'll do that," the old man said. "Clean 'em up after you're gone." He handed the shotgun and some shells to the boy.

Skeeter went to the shelf and took down a lard can and put in the meat he had cooked the night before. He opened the back door and reached for a frayed cotton rope that was hanging there.

The dawn breeze had come and birds were scolding and fussing around and the east was a dirty gray and then quickly a reddish glow and the night ran away and the shadows slunk into the trees.

Skeeter stood in the doorway by the old man and put a shell in the gun and clicked on the safety. "I'll be going."

He walked down the path and Uncle Jesse watched him until he was out of sight; then he turned back into the cabin. He glanced at the dirty dishes and left them there, and stepped to the back door and stared at the wood to be cut and he sat down on the steps and watched the day unfold.

Skeeter stayed close to the path and the soft earth was between his bare toes. The mist was rising fast. As soon as he was beyond Uncle Jesse's sight he clicked off the safety on the gun and hunched his shoulders and was a hunter stalking game, like Stonewall Jackson, like Nathan Bedford Forrest.

His finger was on the trigger guard and the gun was pointed at the ground before him. He slipped out of the path and crept behind a clump of briers toward the spring and felt for the breeze and it was drifting his way. That was good.

He still could not see the spring and the first sound he heard was a heavy grunt. Might be a bear and if a bear were at the spring then nothing else would be there, for all things feared the swamp bears. Even the alligators slunk away.

The boy swallowed hard. He would aim at that bear's head. That was the place to kill a bear. Slap-dab in the head, between the eyes. Pull the gun tight against the shoulder and draw a bead and squeeze the trigger. Never jerk it. He would fire and break the gun and load quickly and be ready for his second shot.

Then he saw the spring and the wild pigs wallowing in the muddy trough between the spring and the river and he laughed at himself. Nothing but a bunch of swamp pigs messing around and rooting for food. He picked up a clod and chunked at them and they grunted and walked away.

He looked at all the tracks thereabout and most of them were pig tracks, although a deer had been that way and a coon or so. He laid the gun across a log and sat down by the spring, and the swamp woke up while he sat there. The sun turned the river from yellow to muddy brown and the swamp buzzed and hummed as the day things went forth for food. If any other animals were coming for water they soon would come, for the day was full open.

Skeeter took the meat out of the lard can and put a piece on a tuft of grass and another piece in the path. He picked up the gun and the rope and the lard bucket and walked toward the river, circling the spring until he found the spot he wanted: a tangle of weeds and vines between him and the spring and a log to sit on and a tree for shade.

Now there was nothing to do but wait. He was lonely and time

was slow and he whistled a song with his tongue against his teeth, and then the whistle was a gasp; for standing there between him and the river and within chunking distance was the thing, its head cocked to one side and staring at him, its smooth tail curved high over its back.

The boy forgot the gun and the rope and everything. Then he instinctively held out his hand and was not afraid. He got up from the log and took a step or two and squatted and snapped his fingers and whistled softly. The animal cocked its head to the other side and backed away.

"You ain't nothing but a little old dog. Why don't you come here?"

He patted the ground and held out his hand again.

The strange creature tilted its nose and sniffed.

"How come you didn't eat that meat? How come you slipping up on me like this? You ain't nothing but a little old girl dog."

The animal Skeeter saw was about as high as his knees. The little wrinkled face was almost sad and the white hair blazed down the chest and around the throat, but mostly the thing was red and the hair very short.

"Ain't going to hurt you. Wouldn't hurt you for nothing."

The dog, for she was a dog, blinked her eyes and was trembling but did not run away. Slowly the boy walked toward her holding out his hand and talking to her and then he knelt by her and stroked her and she stopped trembling. She kept blinking her hazel eyes and sniffed his hands and his feet. A pleading look came to her eyes as she fastened them on Skeeter, and they filled up.

"She's crying. Be John dog if she ain't crying." Skeeter was crying too. "Never saw no dog that could cry before." He pulled her to him and she turned over and Skeeter scratched her. Then she chuckled, a happy mixture of chortle and yodel.

"Now you're laughing." The boy held her close. "Ain't no dog due to laugh and cry. Like Uncle Jesse said, it ain't natural." But he, too, was laughing.

Skeeter lifted her in his arms and lugged her back to the log where he had left the rope and he fastened the rope around her neck and tied a knot that would have held a buffalo. He took

the rest of the food out of the lard can and fed her from his hand. Then he said, "Come on. Let's go home. Me and you."

The dog followed willingly and the rope was not necessary at all, but Skeeter was taking no chances. He wrapped the rope around his wrist and they headed up the path and when the cabin was in sight Skeeter began running, and the dog was at his heels. "Uncle Jesse!" he shouted. "I got it."

The old man still was sitting on the back steps, staring at the saw he got on credit from Cash and the wood that should have been cut to pay for it. "Well, now, I do know." Uncle Jesse was flabbergasted. "That ain't nothing but a little old dog."

"Little old girl dog."

"Well, now, I do declare." Uncle Jesse moved toward the boy and the dog leaped between him and Skeeter and braced herself.

"Hold that thing." The old man stepped back. "Ain't rightly friendly."

Skeeter slipped his arm around the dog's chest. "That's just Uncle Jesse. Lives here, too. Just Uncle Jesse."

The dog looked from the boy to the old man, and the old man still was skeptical and kept his distance. "Didn't growl or nothing. Just jumped."

"Can't growl," Skeeter said. "Do she ought to be barking or growling she just laughs." He sat on the back steps and the dog sat at his feet and never took her eyes from his face.

"Wonder how she got around here?" The old man propped against the cabin and studied the animal.

"Don't know, but she's mine. I found her."

"That dog's been around folks. Belongs to somebody."

"Belongs to me. I found her."

"Nobody around here ever had a dog like that. Laughing when it oughta bark. That's a furrin dog. Don't belong around here."

"Does now." There was defiance in the boy's words. "Got me a dog, Uncle Jesse."

"Sure have. Got yourself a dog all right. What you aim to call her?"

"Maybe Dixie. How that sound? Dixie."

"Half the dogs in this swamp named Dixie," Uncle Jesse said.

"Then how about Pal?"

"All the dogs that ain't named Dixie are named Pal." He sat down by the boy. "She's yours, and you got a right to call her what you want to. But if I had a dog like her, I'd give her a *real* name. Som'n that means som'n. How about Gertrude?"

"Don't think much of it myself."

"Reckoned you wouldn't." The old man held out his hand and touched the dog and she licked his hand. "Know'd a lady named Gertrude once. She had pensy eyes and was as pure as the jest of God. Punied up and died a long time ago."

"We'll name her Gertrude," Skeeter said quickly and understood more than he had been told.

"Not unless you want to." Uncle Jesse was stroking the dog. "But this here dog is a lady like Gertrude was. Keeps herself clean as a coon and don't even smell like a dog. She's a pure D lady."

"Then let's call her Lady? How that sound—Lady?"

"You got it." The old man slapped his knee in approval. "Now that's a name what is a name. Huh, Lady?"

Skeeter said, "We got us a dog, ain't we, Uncle Jesse? Ain't we, Lady?" Lady looked from the boy to the old man and licked their hands and chuckled.

"Take off the rope," Uncle Jesse said. "This dog ain't going nowhere. Wild mules couldn't pull this dog away from here."

Skeeter slipped the rope over Lady's head and she ran around the back yard and came back to his side and then followed the boy and the old man into the cabin.

Uncle Jesse crumbled corn bread in a plate and wet it with pot likker and put it before her. She sniffed the food disdainfully at first and ate it only when she saw the boy fix a bowl for himself and for the old man. She licked herself clean and explored the cabin and sniffed the brush broom and the hickory nuts and then the beds, and jumped on Skeeter's bed and tucked her nose under her paws and went to sleep.

"Acts like she owns the place," Skeeter said. "And like you said, she's been around folks. Reckon she's a hunting dog, Uncle Jesse?"

"How she going to hunt if she can't bark? How she going to tree?"

"Maybe she's a bird dog. Bird dogs don't have to bark."

"Maybe. Let's walk around some and see how she does."

Skeeter was hoping for this and he called Lady and she came to him. "Knows her name already."

"Knows you," Uncle Jesse said.

They headed east, toward the ridges that rimmed the swamp and to the dry land beyond. Uncle Jesse said, "She follows good." He turned to the dog and commanded, "Heel!"

Lady cocked her head toward the boy and chuckled. It was obvious that she'd never heard the order before.

"Ain't been trained," Skeeter said. "That's sure as shooting. Maybe she ain't no bird dog."

"Maybe she don't understand us, being from outside. Wave her off and see what she does."

The boy patted her head and waved his right arm in a wide circle, the signal that she should range and cast. She sat on her haunches and looked at him. Skeeter whistled and signaled again and still she did not move.

Uncle Jesse shook his head. "Ain't no bird dog. Hate to tell you, but it's so."

They walked across a ridge and came to a wilderness of broom-straw circled by pines and her nose came up and into the breeze and she wheeled. Her curved tail suddenly was still and her head was poised.

"Flash pointing," Jesse said.

Lady held the strange point for only a second and then dashed toward a patch of wire grass about sixty yards away. Halfway there, she broke her gait and began creeping. A whir of feathers sounded in the wire grass and a covey of quail exploded almost under her nose. She sprang for a bird and missed it.

"Partridge!" Jesse's mouth sagged open.

Skeeter was trembling and his face was white. "Look how far she smelled them birds. And she pointed."

"Flash pointed. Any dog will flash point."

Skeeter whistled and Lady came to him and sat at his feet and ran out her tongue and panted.

"She'll hunt birds, Uncle Jesse. I can train her."

"She'll flush." They walked on and Lady stayed at Skeeter's heels and made no effort to range or hunt.

"Tell you what," Uncle Jesse said. "Let's cross the river and let Gates Watson see that dog."

"How come?" the boy asked quickly.

"Gates might know what kind of dog she is and where she came from. Gates knows a heap. He's been plum' up to Alcorn A and M college."

"I'm sort of tuckered," the boy protested. "We ought to head for home."

"Maybe you're right." Uncle Jesse didn't press the point. He struck off through the swamp without another word.

Supper was over and the dishes were cleaned before Skeeter spoke. "Reckon Gates mout know what kind of dog I got?"

"Mout'n. All them books he reads."

"But you reckon he mout know who used to own my dog?"

"Ain't saying. It's your business."

The boy propped his elbows on the table and stared into the lamplight. "You know, I don't aim to tell Gates about my dog. Don't mean to be uppity, Uncle Jesse. Don't mean to try to sit in the big chair and do any big talking. But I don't aim for nobody to take my dog. I found her, and she's mine."

"Ain't nobody going to take your dog." Uncle Jesse got up. "Let's get some sleep. Got to cut that wood tomorrow."

Skeeter went to his own bed and Lady followed him and when he was bedded down she lay at his feet. Once she chuckled in her sleep and snuggled closer to the boy.

CHAPTER 3

WITH ANOTHER mouth to feed, Uncle Jesse beat the sun up and had been at the woodpile about an hour when Skeeter appeared in the back doorway. His hair was tangled into a snarl and he kept yawning as he stood there and watched Lady sniff around the cabin. The old man scarcely glanced up.

"Breakfast on the stove." He yelled it above the whine of the saw.



"Seen it," Skeeter yelled back. "Just wondering about a cup of coffee."

Uncle Jesse grunted and the boy knew that the answer was no, and so he turned back into the cabin. The old man yelled again: "Go wash your face. And comb that hair."

Skeeter did as he was told and Uncle Jesse muttered to himself, "Got to cut that boy's hair. One of these days I'm going to do it. Got to watch his hair and manners. Sprouting up fast, that young'un is."

The day was getting hot. Skeeter and Lady came out to the woodpile and stood around and watched Uncle Jesse work. The sawdust was flying and some of it stuck to the old man's sweaty face and some of it got down his collar. "Aim to stand there all day?" Uncle Jesse had his habits on and was in a bad humor. He always was when he had to work. "You got to go over to the Watsons'. Buttermilk day. We plum' out."

"Yes, sir. I know it. Think I'll leave my dog here."

"She'll follow you. Can't be watching her, and me cutting."

"Then I'll tie her up."

Skeeter got two buckets and the frayed rope and called Lady to the shade of a water oak and tied her and started away, but she strained against the rope and choked herself.

"Won't stay tied," the boy called to Uncle Jesse. "Maybe you could keep your eye on her."

"She's your dog," Uncle Jesse shouted, above the saw.

The boy felt put upon and snatched the rope off his dog. He picked up the buckets and whistled for Lady to follow him and struck off toward the river. He was mad at Uncle Jesse and wished that he was grown and his own boss.

He cut north through the swamp and toward the little bayou where they kept the skiff. At the edge of a canebrake Lady's nose tilted and she braced to a point. She held it for only a few seconds and then dived into a clump of reeds and snatched a water rat. She was eating it when Skeeter ran up.

"Don't do that!" He grabbed one of her ears and shook her head. "Ain't you got good sense? Don't run into water after things. Snake or a 'gator'll grab you."

Lady dropped the rat and tucked her head and when she looked up at him her eyes were filled and that woeful expression was on her face. Skeeter knelt by her. "Didn't go to hurt your feelings. Just don't want you to get killed."

Her eyes cleared as she accepted his apology and licked his face and they walked on down the bayou to the skiff, and they got in it and Skeeter paddled down the bayou and across the river while his dog sat in the bow and chuckled that haunting laugh that sounded like a yodel and ended in that weird "gro-o-o."

On the other side of the river, Skeeter tied the skiff and called his dog to his side. "Now, you're going to stay here and wait for me." Lady cocked her head impudently. "Be gone thirty, maybe forty minutes. You ain't going."

He got the rope and tied her and petted her until she lay down and then he picked up the buckets and started away. She sprang to her feet and strained at the rope and he turned and cuffed her. "Lay down! Stay right here."

That pitiful, pleading look was on her face and her eyes filled. It wrenched his heart, but he cuffed her again and spoke sternly, "None of that bawling, neither."

The boy meant business and she knew it and she lay still and watched him move off and he turned only once to look back at her. "Stay there, Lady. Like I'm telling you, stay right there."

She did, and now she knew that the boy was her master, and she liked it.

He hurried out of the swamp and across the ridge where the Watsons lived in a five-room house that had running water and a coal-oil stove. Folks called Ed Watson Uncle Ed and his wife Aunt Bonnie Dew. She was born over in Louisiana where they spoke a lot of French and had been christened Bon Dieu, but the swamp folks twisted it into Bonnie Dew. She and Uncle Ed had a raft of children and Gates was the oldest.

Aunt Bonnie Dew was sweeping the porch. She was a tall, bony woman whose shoes were always run over. She called out to Skeeter: " 'Bout time you got here. Come on in and visit awhile."

"Ain't got long," the boy said. "I'll get my buttermilk and head on back, thanking you just the same."

Aunt Bonnie Dew studied Skeeter and shook her head in disapproval. "How come Jesse Jackson don't cut your hair?"

"Aims to one of these days." The boy put down the buckets.

"Come on in the house. Got a pitcher of sweet milk just waiting. Boy needs sweet milk. Jesse Jackson ought to be shot for not feeding you sweet milk."

"Don't like sweet milk." Skeeter immediately defended Uncle Jesse. "Like coffee myself."

"Coffee!" Aunt Bonnie Dew was indignant. "Coffee will make a young'un turn brown and give him the jaundice." She herself was as black as ebony. "And all your teeth'll fall out. Like your Uncle Jesse. He ought to be shot with a washtub."

"Where's Gates?"

"Out back som'rs." She snatched up the buckets and disappeared.

The boy found Gates down by the barn. He was tinkering with a gasoline motor that pumped water into the house.

"Howdy, Gates. How you been?"

"Pretty good, Claude. And you?"

"Pretty good." Skeeter stepped to the shed and got a bucket and turned it upside down and sat on it.

Gates looked closely at the boy and then over toward the ridge. "Come by yourself?"

"Uh huh."

"Everything all right at your place?"

"Pretty good." Skeeter leaned over and examined the motor. Wished they had a gasoline motor to pump water.

"What's eating you, Claude?"

"Nothing much. Me and Uncle Jesse got to talking about dogs last night. Know anything about dogs?"

"Maybe. What's on your mind?"

"Uncle Jesse said that almost any dog could be trained to hunt birds. I said that only bird dogs could hunt birds."

"I'm on your Uncle Jesse's side. I believe almost any dog can be taught to hunt birds. Of course, not as good as a bird dog. But good enough. You can train a dog to do most anything." He pulled the motor closer and took out the bearings. "Except maybe laugh and cry and talk." He kept his eyes hard on his work.

The boy got to his feet. "I'll tell Uncle Jesse you said he was right." He hesitated, then said, "Just happen to think about it — you been hearing anything funny over in the swamp? Like a h'ant laughing?"

Gates looked the boy squarely in the eyes. "Not a thing."

"Heard anything about anybody losing a dog?"

"I haven't heard a thing, Claude. Don't let it bother you."

Then it was that Skeeter wondered if Gates already knew.

He went back to the house and Aunt Bonnie Dew was waiting on the porch. The two buckets of buttermilk were on the steps and there was a third bucket, and Skeeter knew what was in it. Nevertheless, he peeped in to be polite. It was filled with cold biscuits, big fat brown ones, and baked sweet potatoes. "Thank you," he said. "Me and Uncle Jesse both thank you. You make the best biscuits I ever et."

He found a stick and swung the buckets over his shoulder and walked away without haste, but when he was beyond sight of the Watsons he began running, and the buttermilk sloshed in the buckets. Lady was right where he had left her. She had chewed the rope in two and had freed herself, but was waiting for him.

He threw his arms around her and they rolled on the ground together and he was laughing. She chuckled, too, and he gave her one of Aunt Bonnie Dew's biscuits. Then he patted the side of the skiff and she jumped in and he paddled back into the bayou.

"Going to make a bird dog out of you sure as the Lord made little apples. You got sense enough to hunt birds. But you can't hunt rats or coons or things like that. Hear me! They'll lead you into the river and trap you."

Lady sat on her haunches and ran out her tongue.

"I'll learn you not to mess with rats." He tied the boat and hunted around until he found the rat Lady had killed and then unraveled a bit of the rope and tied the rat around her neck. Lady was humiliated and tried to claw it off and her eyes overflowed with tears. Skeeter tapped her nose with the rat. "Stop that bawling. I aim to make you sick of rats. Come on."

She followed him and the dead rat dangled from her neck and against her chest.

He took the shortest way home and when the cabin was in sight he saw Mister Cash's truck parked near the front steps.

Skeeter's first impulse was to go back into the swamp and stay there until Mister Cash had gone. But Mister Cash was bound to find out sooner or later, so there was nothing to do but face up to it and get it over with.

He found Uncle Jesse and Mister Cash out by the woodpile. The storekeeper gawked at Lady and then busted out laughing. Her tail was curved high and the dead rat and the frayed rope trailed from her neck. Mister Cash slapped his leg and his little potbelly shook his mirth. "What's that thing?"

Skeeter felt his neck reddening and he stooped by his dog and untied the rat and threw it away. Be John Brown if he'd humiliate his dog in front of a man like Mister Cash. He had the best dogs in the world, coming and going; foxhounds and coon hounds and hog hounds, bird dogs and squirrel dogs. He had a turkey dog, too, the only turkey dog in the county.

When Skeeter spoke he strained for politeness. "Good morning, Mister Cash. How you like my dog?"

"It's a dog all right," Cash said. "Never saw one like it, but it's a dog. Rat runner, huh?"

Skeeter ignored the slur on his dog. "Found her near the spring," he said. "She sort of chuckles. Cries, too."

"Beaten'st thing I ever heard of." Cash took off his felt hat and mopped his bald head. "What she good for?"

"Hunt anything," Skeeter said. "Aim to make a bird dog out of her, don't we, Uncle Jesse?"

"Maybe," the old man said.

"Mister Cash — " Skeeter had to know and so he asked it forthrightly. "You don't know nobody who lost a dog?"

Cash looked hard at Lady. "Ain't nobody around here lost that dog. But I know one thing. I know a boy who found hisself a dog."

"And finders, keepers, ain't she, Cash?" Uncle Jesse suggested.

"Finders, keepers. That's how things are around here." The storekeeper jerked his head at Jesse and said, "Come on out to the truck. Got something to show both of you."

They headed for the truck and Lady ran before them. Cash

climbed into the truck and opened a crate and out stepped the most beautiful dog that any of them had ever seen: an English setter with soft eyes and a majestic demeanor.

Uncle Jesse stepped back as though in the presence of a dignitary and whistled softly. Even Lady moved back, bracing herself after she had retreated to the proper distance. It wasn't fear. It was respect. Skeeter just stood by the truck and stared.

Cash spoke to his dog and the dog leaped from the truck and went to him, ignoring everything else, even Lady.

"Where you get him?" Skeeter asked. "That's a lot of dog."

The storekeeper grinned his pride. "This is a pure D English setter. This is a bird dog that *is* a bird dog. From way back."

"And you ain't stretching it," Uncle Jesse said.

Skeeter was stroking Lady. "Never saw a dog like that. Like I said, where did you get him?"

Cash spoke to his dog and the setter leaped back onto the truck and posed there, looking around like a king. "Bought him over in Alabama a few weeks ago. Like I was telling Jesse, there could be some dogs as good as this one, but there ain't none better." He opened the crate and the dog went in.

Skeeter had a feeling why Mister Cash had brought the setter out to the cabin, but he wasn't sure and so he approached the subject in a roundabout way. "Well, all I can say is that you've got yourself a bird dog. What's his name?"

"Millard Fillmore. Ever heard of Millard Fillmore?" Cash demanded.

"Naw." Uncle Jesse pushed his hat to the back of his head. "Been around here all my life and never heard no such name. For man, boy, dog or goat. Horse or mule, neither."

The storekeeper's eyes crinkled his merriment. "Millard Fillmore was President of the United States."

"Never heard of him," Uncle Jesse said. "Must not have 'mounted to much."

"Going to call him Mill," Cash said. "Better name for calling. But he's registered as Millard Fillmore. Got him in the book just like Yankees and them rich bird-dog men over in Alabama and up around Atlanta." Cash opened the door to his truck and

climbed behind the wheel. He rested his arms on the door and looked down at Skeeter and at Lady. "Brought Mill out here for you and Jesse to look after him and work him for me. But you already got a dog."

"Got room for two dogs," the boy said hopefully. The storekeeper would pay well for them to keep his dog and work him. Then, too, the setter could teach Lady how to hunt. "I'd feed him good and take him to the woods every day."

"No. I reckon not."

"You don't want your dog running with mine." The boy spoke slowly and there was a trace of bitterness in his words.

"Ain't saying that at all." Cash avoided the boy's eyes. "You acting like I low-rated your dog. And I ain't. Just that Mill's a fine bird dog and yours hunts rats. If my dog run with yours, he mor'n likely would learn bad habits." Cash chewed the words as though he disliked saying them. "Can't take a chance. My dog is in the book. Paid a hundred dollars for him."

"I get the drift." Skeeter stepped back from the truck and Lady followed him. "Your dog's in the book and mine came from the swamp. Well, I aim to keep mine."

"That's what I told him," Jesse said. "Told him we'd be rightly proud to look after his, but we aim to keep ours."

"Know how you feel," Cash said. "But I aim to get Gates Watson to look after mine, and work him. Your dog won't be running over that way, will she?"

Skeeter said, "I'll keep my dog this side of the river. I won't let her run with your dog and learn him bad habits. But you keep yours on the other side of the river."

Cash stepped on the starter. "No hard feelings."

"No hard feelings," Skeeter said.

Cash put his truck into gear and told them good-bye. The old man and the boy watched the truck out of sight.

"How much did Mister Cash offer if we'd look after his dog?" Skeeter asked.

"Not so much."

"How much, Uncle Jesse?"

"Three dollars a week and his som'n t'eat."

The amount surprised the boy. Such a sum in a few months would mean Uncle Jesse's false teeth and maybe down payment on a .20-gauge shotgun. He felt downright miserable. "Heard a bull 'gator the other day. Get him, come cool weather. Hide'll sell good." He did not raise his eyes from the ground. "And there's bound to be some bee gums that the bears didn't get. They'll bring four, five dollars. And we can cut a heap of wood between now and rainy weather. We'll get them Roebuckers."

The old man sighed and headed back to the saw. "Don't fret yourself. Did I get them Roebuckers I'd eat so many roastin' ears I'd get down with heartburn, mor'n likely."

CHAPTER 4

SKEETER lost no time beginning Lady's lessons as a bird hunter. Uncle Jesse had told him, "Want yourself a bird dog, stay with it. Ever' day. From can to can't."

And had he loved her one whit less his patience would have been worn out in the chore of teaching her to hunt only birds, for Lady was eager to hunt anything.

In the beginning, she was baffled by his command for her to heel and to walk always at his left and a few steps behind him, or to sit motionless or stand patiently at his left heel when he told her to. He tied a loop of rope around her neck and made her follow him at the proper gait. If she came too close he pushed her back and if she straggled he pulled her close; and all the time he kept saying to her, "Heel, Lady. Heel."

Once she tried to dash away and chase a rabbit and he pinched the rope around her neck, and although the pain was slight the humiliation was much, and her eyes filled. "Don't gimme that crying stuff," he told her. "Used to get by with Uncle Jesse doing that myself."

It took her only a few hours to associate disobedience with disfavor, and she learned quickly that the boy would reward good work, but that he also could punish without pity.

By midafternoon of the first lesson Skeeter was so tired he

sought a log deep in the shade and sat down. Lady curled at his feet and they both rested and then suddenly she tilted her nose and leaped to her feet and was away, ripping toward the river despite his commands that she return. He ran after her and then he heard the chicken squawking and when he found his dog she was eating a big fat Dominecker hen.

The boy was horrified. The chicken belonged to the Watsons and had got across the river somehow. He snatched the chicken and beat Lady across the nose with it. He looked around carefully to be sure nobody had seen the incident and he got a stick and dug a hole in the muck and buried the evidence deep. No one must know that she had killed the hen. A chicken-killing dog, like an egg-sucking dog, could not live in the swamp, for any man had the right to shoot a chicken killer or an egg sucker.

The boy was scared. Having tasted chicken blood, his dog would want more. He grabbed her by the scruff of the neck and cuffed her hard. "Chicken killer!" He spat out the verdict. "No wonder Mister Cash didn't want you running with his dog."

Lady slunk away and lay down and put her paws over her face. He walked over and sat down by her. "Don't you know that a chicken dog ain't no-count? Ain't you got a lick of sense?" He was so exasperated that he felt like crying and yet he yearned to pet her, but that wouldn't do. So he ordered her to follow him and they went deeper into the swamp and she stayed right at his heels until they were almost to the bayou and then she cut around in front of him and looked over her shoulder and chuckled. And then, deliberately, she dashed away. He was so surprised that he stood there for a minute and didn't even call her.

She was eating a water rat when he found her. He realized that she was not afraid of blows and cuffs. She must be shamed. He unraveled more of the rope and tied the dead rat around her neck. She pawed at the thing as she had at the other one and tried to shake it loose and, failing this, she looked up at him as though begging him to free her of this hated burden.

"Got to wear it." He drew the noose tighter and the dead rat was against her throat. "Can't help if folks do see it and know you're a rat runner."

Evening gloam was nigh and yet, as weary as he was, the boy dreaded to go home. The first rat wasn't so bad. His dog didn't know any better then. But she had done it a second time and that was a shame on her and a slur on him.

The sun was far down behind the swamp when Skeeter walked into the cabin and Lady slunk in behind him. Uncle Jesse was fixing supper and he glanced down at her and saw the rat around her neck. Skeeter said nothing and Uncle Jesse said nothing, and Lady crawled over to the old man and rubbed against his leg, begging him to help her. He shoved her aside with his foot, seemingly without pity or even sympathy.

She slunk away and went to Skeeter's bed and leaped up on it and the boy grabbed her by the scruff of her neck and jerked her off. "No rat dog sleeps in my bed," he said bitterly.

So she crawled under the bed and kept pawing at the thing, but it would not come off and she lay there sobbing her misery and mortification. The old man and the boy sat down at the table and ate their supper and did not speak her name or even glance her way.

Skeeter piled all the scraps into a pan and put it by the edge of the bed. She would not show her face, even for food, and the boy turned his back to her without a word and helped Uncle Jesse wash the dishes.

The old man put the lamp in the middle of the table and Skeeter said, "Maybe she was hungry. Maybe that's how come she did like she did."

"Ain't no two ways about it, you got a rat dog on your hands. Hard to break a rat dog."

Skeeter didn't dare tell him about the chicken. "Aim to leave the rat on and let her get a bait of it. All night. What you think?"

"That'll be long enough. A dead rat ain't rightly nice around the house."

"She'll be broke by then."

"Hope so. A rat dog ain't worth feeding. Never saw a rat dog make a bird dog." His pipe was clogged up and he got a broom straw and cleaned it. "Hope she don't go after chickens or eggs. Somebody'd shoot her, sure as the Lord made little apples."

There was no answer to that. The boy went out to get some stovewood and the old man got up and poured a little bacon drippings on Lady's food.

She thumped her tail against the floor and licked his face and then pawed at the rat, entreating him to remove it.

"I ain't in this." He stroked her back and felt her trembling. "This here is between you and the boy. Now eat."

As she ate he kept talking to her. "You had ought to stick by the boy and do like he says. He went out on a limb for you. He wouldn't let ol' Cash low-rate you. You got to stick to the boy, me and you both." Then he saw the tiny pinfeathers clinging to the corners of her mouth and was horrified. But it was a thing he could not take up with the boy. If Skeeter knew his dog was a chicken killer, then it was his hurt. If he didn't know, then he would never know from the old man.

When Skeeter came back with the wood and saw Lady eating and saw the bacon fat on the food, he knew what had happened.

"Is that the way to train a dog?" he said.

"Reckon not." The old man felt sheepish. "Didn't mean to butt in. Just sort of felt sorry for her."

"It's all right as long as I didn't do it. She's got to know that I won't stand for no messing around. . . . Like me to read to you?"

"Don't know nothing I'd like more than a little reading."

The boy went over to a stack of dog-eared old magazines that Cash Evans had brought out weeks before, picture magazines and sports magazines and many other kinds. "Do you want I should read about the Space Man?" He had picked up a comic book.

"Let's have one about cowboys. You know me. Just naturally cotton to cowboys."

Skeeter found a Western magazine and thumbed through it to a likely-looking story and began reading.

Uncle Jesse slouched in his chair and puffed his pipe and took in the beauty of the words about marvels that only his fancy could picture; the prairies so different from the swamp and so far away. The hard dry gulches, the brave men, the brave land — of his own boyhood dreams.

Lady heard the droning of the boy's voice and cocked her head

from side to side, watching them. She was lonesome over in the shadows by the bed. She crawled toward them, dragging the rat, and her ears were tilted to catch Skeeter's summons if he spoke it. The boy paid her no mind; none. So she curled at his feet and put her head on her paws and watched him.

He finished the story. It took him a long time to finish it and Uncle Jesse was almost asleep.

"Crackerjack." Uncle Jesse opened his eyes and his mind came back from the high prairies, back to the swamp and the crawling night.

Skeeter felt his dog's cold nose against his bare feet and she was licking his feet and he hurt to reach down and pat her, and yet he wouldn't, but got up and took the magazine back to the pile. "I'm sleepy."

"Rightly tuckered myself." Uncle Jesse put the lamp close to his bed so he could blow it out without any effort much.

Skeeter went to his own bed and Lady crawled under it. He reached over and tapped the floor and she came out and he untied the rat and threw it out of the window and she licked his hand and his face, and then she leaped in the bed and snuggled down beside him.

THE DAY that Skeeter gave his dog her first lesson in casting, he was so pleased with himself, and with Lady, that he ran all the way home to report her progress to Uncle Jesse.

But when he saw the old man sitting in the shade with Cash Evans he slowed to a walk. He greeted the visitor politely but with reserve, for he still was rankling with the knowledge that the storekeeper had segregated Millard Fillmore from Lady.

Cash said, "Came out to get my wood."

"Ol' Cash says this wood will settle that ol' frazzling account he been carrying for us," Uncle Jesse told Skeeter.

"Not for the saw. Squares for the supplies."

"Long as we're squared for our som'n t'eat—that's all that counts," Uncle Jesse said.

Skeeter felt relieved. Supplies were running low and they had no money. He went to the back steps where the water bucket was

set in the shade and drank from the dipper. Lady followed him and lapped from the bucket.

"Is it all right for her to drink out of your bucket?" Cash asked.

"Me and Uncle Jesse don't care," Skeeter said.

"She's the cleanest dog I ever seen," Uncle Jesse said, "and the smartest. She's a hunting fool."

"Whatcha mean — hunting?" Cash looked at Lady. "You standing there telling me that this is a hunting dog?"

"She's doing rightly good so far," Skeeter said. "Just this morning I waved her out and she cast."

"I'm from Missouri," Cash said. "You've got to show me."

"Come on, I'll show you some casting," Skeeter said.

He started out of the yard and Lady trotted beside him and the men followed. They went over the ridge and to a field of broomstraw. A breeze was rustling the sedge and the sun was slanting hot through the pine trees that rimmed the field. Skeeter spoke a command to his dog and her ears came up and she looked at him and then away, raising her nose into the breeze.

"Sharp, ain't she?" Uncle Jesse spoke his praise softly.

"Hunting proud," Cash said and by this he meant that she was sensitive and by no means arrogant or haughty.

Skeeter knelt beside her and stroked her chest and whispered to her and she was trembling, and then he stood and called, "Hup!" He waved his hand toward the field. "Hup, Lady. Birds!"

She lowered her nose to the ground and was away and slipped into the broomstraw and raised her nose high into the wind and chuckled, and then began racing across the field, covering it from side to side.

Skeeter glanced back at Uncle Jesse and the old man grinned and nudged Cash, and the storekeeper grinned, too, and then laughed. "Be John Brown! Look at that. Casting, sure as I'm standing here."

"Whipping that field, ain't she?" Uncle Jesse rammed his hands in his pockets and r'ared back and watched her. "Covering that field like a fall of dew."

Quickly, Lady was out of sight in the broomstraw, working deep in it, and then she appeared on a rise to the east, tossed her

head high for any scent that was on the breeze, and raced away again, ripping through the sedge and circling.

Skeeter said nothing. It was his privilege to brag, but he didn't big-talk about his dog.

"Beats all," Cash said. "Casting like a bird dog. Hound from pup to papa, but casting like a bird dog."

"Aim to follow her?" Skeeter said. "She's working fast and we'll lose her if we don't move on."

They walked rapidly across the field, heading toward the bayou and the swamp beyond, and Lady flashed before them and was running easy through the sedge, covering the ground close and catching the breeze and the scents it bore.

"Never saw nothing prettier." Uncle Jesse had awe in his voice and bursting pride.

"Ain't arguing so far," Cash said. "Acts like a bird dog, but is she hunting birds?"

"Ain't saying." Skeeter spoke with reserve.

Lady was out of sight in a thick growth and the two men and the boy walked to a knoll and waited for her to reappear. The bayou drifted by the edge of the field and Cash was the first to see Gates Watson standing by the bayou and looking their way, and he said, "Yonder's Gates."

"His skiff's tied to that ol' dead gum," Uncle Jesse said. "Wonder what he's up to?"

And then they saw the chickens, five or six big Domineckers scratching along the bank of the bayou and Gates shooing them toward his boat. He looked over at the two men and the boy, and called a greeting.

It was then that Lady dashed out of the undergrowth and wheeled toward the bayou and froze to a point. Her curved tail poked up over her back and she spraddled her front legs and sort of squatted and her nose was toward the bayou and the chickens there. Uncle Jesse grunted and looked at Skeeter and the boy's lips started quivering and he struggled to hold back his tears and his mortification.

"Chicken dog," Cash Evans said contemptuously. "She's pointing them chickens."

There was nothing for Skeeter to say. There were the chickens and there was his dog on a frozen point. He was silent, only hurting deeply within himself.

It was Uncle Jesse who spoke for her because the aged have more faith than the young. Uncle Jesse said, "She's got birds."

Cash laughed. "You're crazy. She's got chickens."

"I'm standing here and saying she's got birds." He said it confidently.

"It's chickens, Uncle Jesse." The boy strained the words through the anguish of his hurt. "Ain't no use of saying it ain't. My dog's pointing chickens."

"Go to your dog, boy. Flush them birds and get her off that point. She'll stand there till judgment day. She's telling you she's got birds and you got to believe her."

Skeeter, only to please the old man, stepped to his dog's side and into the sedge before her; and then a whir and a flurry of wings and the quail were up and away.

Cash Evans forgot that the boy was nigh and took the name of his God in vain. "Great God A'mighty! She had birds! Casted and pinted and held them." He began jumping up and down in his excitement and he jerked off his hat and threw it to the ground. "Seen it myself. Me standing right here and seen it."

"Told you she had birds." Uncle Jesse spoke with the dignity of a prophet.

Skeeter knelt by his dog and the tears came and he put his arms around her neck and rubbed his cheek against her face. "My little ol' dog. My little ol' dog."

"A hunter born," Cash said. "And a hunter bred. Is she gun-shy? Can you shoot over her?"

Skeeter brushed his sleeve across his nose and stood up, struggling for the dignity that came so naturally to Uncle Jesse. "Ain't had a chance to shoot over her yet. Can't shoot quail until a cool spell hits."

"She's got a hard mouth." Cash ran his hand under her lower jaw. "She'll fetch rough and tear birds. You know how to break her of hardmouthing?"

"Wire stick?" Skeeter asked.

"Wire stick is best," Cash said. "Just wrap some wire around a stick and make her fetch it. She won't bite down. That'll break her of hardmouth. Some folks use bob-wire."

"I'll use bailing wire. Bob-wire will stick her."

Gates Watson walked up from the bayou and added his praise. "Thought at first she was pointing my chickens and then I saw she had birds. It sure was a sight."

"Knowed she had birds," Uncle Jesse said in a reverie of wonder.

That evening, Skeeter fed Lady a can of pork and beans and felt good in this rare experience of extravagance.

CHAPTER 5

DOG DAYS came in steaming heat and swooshing rains and the locusts shed their skins and the moon was red, and there was a ring around it. The bull alligators bellowed every night and the catfish swam far up the bayous and the crawfish dug deep.

Uncle Jesse spent most of his time in the swamp cutting cypress knees, and traded them to Cash Evans, who steamed them and peeled them and trucked them to Mobile, where tourists paid fancy prices for the twisted and gnarled novelties.

Ordinarily Skeeter would have worked alongside Uncle Jesse but now he gave his days to his dog and went with her every day to the fields, come rain and high water.

He wrapped wire around a stick and taught her to fetch and when she bit hard she learned better, and then he got feathers and tied them to a pine cone and she learned to retrieve it without crushing the feathers. The hard mouth had become a soft mouth.

One day was like the next and the red moon wasted and autumn crept down from the north and brought the dry winds that blew the clouds high; and the ducks began flying and all night they passed high against the moon.

The acorns were down when Cash Evans came by that day. Skeeter and Uncle Jesse and Lady went out to the truck and then the boy saw Millard Fillmore was along and wondered just what Mister Cash was up to.

Lady saw the big bird dog, too, and braced herself and watched him. Skeeter stood by her side and Mister Cash called out, "Brought ol' Mill along. He won't bother your dog. Needn't fret yourself."

Cash got out of his truck. His dog jumped out and stood beside him and his head was high as he watched Lady and his tail fanned a friendly greeting. But Lady's tail was rigid and her hackles bristled the warning that she was on her own territory and the visitor was an intruder.

Mister Cash snapped a leash on his dog. "Just thought I'd bring ol' Mill out here and let him run these ridges. Mess of quail this side of the river."

"Lots of partridge and lots of ridges." Uncle Jesse glanced at Skeeter, thus telling him that it was polite for him to say something.

"Plenty of quail for all," the boy said. "Me and my dog aim to work that north ridge. Plenty birds around the south ridge if you and your dog want to work over there."

"Don't see why they can't run together, mine and yours," Cash said.

Uncle Jesse spoke up. "You had your say a while back, Cash. Now what you saying?"

"Saying I was wrong, that's what I'm saying."

Skeeter was quick with his forgiveness. "Be rightly proud to have your dog work alongside mine."

Thus the issue was closed and forgotten. Cash freed his dog from the leash and the big setter dashed over to Lady to introduce himself, only to be rebuffed. She tossed her head disdainfully and turned away from him.

"Look at her," Cash said. "Big-chairing him. Sitting in the big rocker and looking down at him."

"Like he done her last time," Uncle Jesse said. "Now she's putting him below the salt."

"Do her good to run with ol' Mill," Cash said. "She'll pick up tricks. That's one reason I brought him over — to help you out. How's her hard mouth coming along?"

"Mouth soft as eider down," Uncle Jesse said. "She can tote an egg. Your dog egg-tote?"

The storekeeper was taking no chances of a showdown. "Ain't no use of wasting eggs. That's the trouble with you, Jesse. Always wasting eggs and such."

Skeeter sensed an argument coming and moved to head it off. "Let's get going," he said.

They walked over to the ridges and high ground and Cash called his dog and waved him out and Millard Fillmore raced into the brush and began casting. "Quick, ain't he?" Cash said.

"Cute all right." Uncle Jesse rammed his hands in his pockets. "A merry tail, too — whipping right pert."

Skeeter waited until the big setter was deep in the sage and then he waved his hand and spoke to Lady. "Hup. Birds." She trotted across the field, chuckling as she went and her head came up and she took the breeze and wheeled away, ripping through the broomstraw. Millard Fillmore was circling cautiously and surely, covering every inch of the ground, but Lady was whipping recklessly — racing around the big setter, working to the far edge of the field and then back again.

"She ain't casting," Cash said. "She's just running. She ought to stay close to ol' Mill and learn something."

"It's her way," Skeeter said.

"Can't no dog hunt that fast," Cash said. "You got to slow her down if you aim to make a bird dog out of her. She'll run herself out."

Millard Fillmore had worked to the edge of a pine thicket and was coming back slowly and Lady was out of sight. Skeeter climbed on a stump and looked around, and couldn't see her.

"Bet she's plum' to Mobile by now," Cash said.

"She's on a point." Skeeter got down from the stump.

"How come you think she's on a point?" Cash demanded.

"Because she ain't casting." The boy headed toward the pine thicket and the clearing beyond. "If she was running, we'd see her. And if she ain't running, she's got birds."

The storekeeper winked at Uncle Jesse and the three of them hurried toward the clearing and there was Lady standing cold still, her front legs spraddled and her tail stiff over her back like a poker.

"You call that a point?" Cash studied the dog closely and looked back over his shoulder at his own dog that still was circling. "That ain't no point. That's a squat."

"She's got birds," Skeeter said.

"Where she got birds? That clearing's as slick as a skillet," Cash said.

Skeeter pointed toward a clump of sage at the far side of the clearing. "Over yonder."

Cash Evans almost busted out laughing, but restrained himself because he must not hurt the boy's feelings. "Now, wait a minute. It's fifty-sixty yards to that sage. Can't no dog smell birds that far. Can't smell a polecat that far."

Just then Millard Fillmore ran by them and then by Lady and she did not budge. "He ran right by her," Skeeter said and there was accusation in his voice. "He ought'a honored her point and backed her up. That's fit'n and proper."

"She ain't on no point." Cash was quick to defend his dog. "Ol' Mill would honor her point, but she ain't got no birds and he's still casting."

Millard Fillmore circled the clearing and then stopped and looked at Lady, and still she held fast, and so he began circling again, working toward the sage, and then he caught the wind and stiffened to a point. It was perfect; his right leg up, his nose steady and his tail out straight. It was so beautiful that Cash took off his hat, as though in tribute. "Now there's a point."

"It sure is," Uncle Jesse said. "He's got Lady's covey."

That was an aspersion on the big setter, a slur at his breeding and behavior, and Cash's face reddened in anger. "Don't stand there saying my dog sneaked another dog's covey."

"Keep your shirt on." Uncle Jesse was as calm as you please. "Ain't low-rating your dog. He's fit'n and mannerable but he just can't smell as good as Lady — "

"Whatcha saying, man? You gone crazy? Ol' Mill is a bird dog and that thing of yours is a hound."

Uncle Jesse said deliberately, "There's quail in that sage. The boy's dog pinted 'em first and she's still pinting 'em. Your dog can't smell as good as her and that's how come he ran by her. He

got close enough to smell them birds and went on his point. He's pinting the same birds that Lady's been pinting all along."

"Prove it!" Cash Evans was spluttering mad. "You've thow'd your bait and so back it up, or back down."

"For the saw?"

"You doggone tootin' for the saw and for all the groceries you can tote — "

"Ain't pushing it." Uncle Jesse picked up a pine cone and tossed it up and down. "Just laying that saw against double what I owe you. So fish or cut bait, Brother Evans. Call or crawl."

"The saw's on the line and I'm standing you that the boy's dog ain't got birds."

Uncle Jesse tossed the pine cone to Skeeter. "Go flush the covey."

The boy walked by his dog, and her eyes followed him but she did not move, and then he walked by Millard Fillmore and the big setter did not move either, and then he threw the pine cone into the clump of sage.

The covey flew up, whirring frantically, and bunched tight and flashed away. Lady broke her point and sat on her haunches and ran out her tongue and laughed, but Millard Fillmore held his point for a few more seconds as though all of this could not be true and then he turned his head and looked back at Lady and then he slunk away, his head low and his tail dragging.

Cash Evans was dumfounded and his little eyes blinked and his lips quivered. Skeeter felt sorry for Mister Cash.

Uncle Jesse said nothing, knowing that nothing he could say would lessen Mister Cash's humiliation. Millard Fillmore was in the pine thicket, alone and dejected, and kept watching his master, expecting a rebuke or maybe sympathy. Lady walked across the clearing to Skeeter's side and stood by him in majestic arrogance. She had humbled a dog that once had been too good to work with her and now she was rubbing it in. The boy wished she wouldn't do like that, but there was no way for him to tell her.

"You got yourself a saw," Cash said at last.

"No hard feelings, Cash."

"No hard feelings. Now I'll be going home. When I see a hound dog that can laugh and point birds fifty yards away — well, I've



had enough." He started away and then he stopped and looked over toward the pines and again his lips quivered and he called out, "Come on, Mill. Let's me and you go home."

The big dog bounded out of the thicket and Cash squatted on the ground and held out his arms and his dog ran to him and whimpered and licked his face.

"Got me a good dog, though." Cash said it in fierce pride.

"He's a good dog," Skeeter said gravely.

"It's just that when you think you got the best, som'n better always comes along." Then the storekeeper told Uncle Jesse and Skeeter so long, but said nothing to Lady. Not a word.

THE WORD got around that the old man and the boy had a laughing dog that pointed quail at fifty yards and folks came from up and down the river to gawk at Lady; and they fed her tidbits like she was something in a zoo and brought gifts to Uncle Jesse and Skeeter for the privilege of seeing the marvel.

They brought hams and bacon sidings and buckets of molasses and pickled peaches, fat kindling wood, big red sweet potatoes and four sacks of hickory nuts. Uncle Jesse took to sitting in a rocker on the front porch and meeting the folks and telling them



all about the dog. He had a sort of singsong spiel and the visitors listened to him and old Jesse Jackson was somebody at last.

Skeeter enjoyed it all almost as much as Uncle Jesse and when he saw folks coming up the road he ran to the old man and hollered, "Get set."

Then Uncle Jesse wet his fingers on his tongue and smoothed down his hair and went to the front porch and sat in the rocker. Lady dashed to the front steps and was ready to sit up and catch the tidbits, and Skeeter waited by the side of the cabin until Uncle Jesse had had his say and then he whistled to Lady.

"Now laugh." And his dog tilted her head and chuckled.

"Now cry." She did, and he let the folks come close so they could see the tears in her eyes.

Sometimes, Skeeter took them back across the ridges and let them see his dog work the fields and point at fifty yards; and nothing had happened to cause so much talk in the swamp since the big freeze of '17, a long time before Skeeter was born.

One day Cash Evans drove out and just sort of sat around the cabin and didn't say much of anything and Uncle Jesse sensed that he wanted to talk to him alone, and so he sent Skeeter down to the spring for a fresh bucket of water and then he said, "What's on your mind, Cash? What's eatin' you?"

"Nothing's eatin' me. Just dropped by." His manner was heavy, however, and he was fidgety. He went over to the stack of magazines he'd given Uncle Jesse and began sorting them.

"You ain't fooling nobody," Uncle Jesse said. "Som'n eatin' you bad."

Cash glared at Uncle Jesse, and went over and sat at the table. "Got to tell you. You'll find out anyway."

"Tell me what? Quit beating around the stump."

"Well, now, a fellow was out from Mobile about a week ago to sell me some stuff and he heard the folks in the store talking about your dog."

"Everybody's talking about her."

"That fellow was back out this morning to sell me some more stuff and he brought me a clipping out of a magazine." Cash felt in his pocket and passed the clipping to Uncle Jesse.

The old man passed it back. "It's rightly nice of you to show it to me. But the boy ain't here and so I'll have to bother you to tell me what it says."

"I ain't enjoying this, Jesse. Just want you to know that."

"Plain as day you ain't, but I'm listening."

"It's about a breed of dogs. Basenji — that's the breed. Live in Africa. Just about the oldest breed there is. Go way back before our-Lord-and-Saviour-Jesus-Christ. Way back before Moses even."

"You don't say?"

"Still a few of 'em in Africa. Best hunting dogs in the world. Them dogs can't bark. Laugh when they try to bark. Stand about so high — " He held out his hand and it was Lady's height. "Red and silky and a blaze on the chest. Lick themselves like cats."

"Sounds like Lady all right."

"It's Lady, Jesse. Sure as shooting, she's one of them dogs."

"Then how come her way over here?"

"Working up to that." The storekeeper folded the clipping and returned it to his pocket. "That fellow from Mobile brought a hunting magazine out with him this morning and the minute I seen it I remembered the picture on the front. It's the same magazine that I brought out here a few months back."

"Then it's still here. What does it look like?"

"Got a picture of a goat on the front. Big goat with horns that go ever' whichaway."

"It's here som'rs." Uncle Jesse riffled through the magazines until he found the one with the mountain goat on the cover and he handed it to Cash.

Methodically, almost painfully, the storekeeper wet his finger and thumbed through the magazine. "It's a ad. Way back in the back." And then he read:

"Lost — a Basenji female in the vicinity of Pascagoula swamp in Mississippi. Twenty-two inches high. White blaze on chest and white collar. Answers to name of Isis of the Blue Nile. Liberal reward for recovery. Old Brook Kennels. Old Lyme, Connecticut."

There was a long silence. Then Cash poked the magazine under his arm. "The boy'll be back t'reckly. I'll get going and take this magazine along. He'll never know the difference."

"You mean don't tell him?"

"You aim to tell him?" Cash asked.

Uncle Jesse walked over to the fireplace and kicked one of the blazing logs. "There's a reward and somebody will go after that reward. He'll find out, so it's right for me to tell him."

"It's your load."

"I'll tote it."

"But if it was me, I wouldn't tell him. That dog is the only thing the boy ever called his'n. I'd let things lay."

"You know how to run a store and how to train bird dogs, but me — I got to raise a young'un. So I'll tell him."

Cash buttoned his jacket tight and reached for his hat. "Then I'll be going." He tossed the magazine back on the pile. "I'm saying again — I ain't enjoying this."

He put on his hat and Uncle Jesse went out to the truck with him and then he was gone and Uncle Jesse went back to his chair by the fire and waited. He heard Skeeter and Lady on the front steps and heard the boy put the water bucket in its proper place and then the boy and the dog came into the cabin.

Skeeter went to the fire and held his hands over the blaze and Lady went to his bed and curled on it and Uncle Jesse sat, wondering how he would tell it.

"What's eatin' Mister Cash?" Skeeter said. "Acted put out, like som'n buzzing round him."

"Som'n you got to know. Som'n I got to tell you."

"Lady?" The boy reacted intuitively.

The old man picked up the magazine and handed it to the boy. "Over at the back. One of them ads. About a lost dog."

Skeeter found the ad and read it, mumbling the words half aloud; and Uncle Jesse watched his face and there was no change in the boy's expression and he read the notice again and closed the magazine and looked a long time at the picture on the front. "Isis of the Blue Nile," he said. "That's a funny name."

"They talking about Lady," Uncle Jesse said.

"Never heard of a dog like that. Basenji."

"Come from Africa."

"How you know?"

"Cash told me. And he sure hated to tell me. It's Lady all right."

"Ain't saying it ain't." The boy's jaw dropped slightly and trembled. "Just saying I never heard of a dog like that."

Uncle Jesse jerked a splinter from one of the blazing logs and lit his pipe. "Dogs like that been in Africa a long time. Back before our-Lord-and-Saviour-Jesus-Christ. Before Moses even. They can't bark. Fellow from Mobile told Cash. Traveling man."

"I see." The boy blinked his eyes rapidly and turned from his uncle and looked at Lady, and then turned from her. Neither of them must see him, for he was too big to cry. "If it's my dog and she belongs in Africa — well, what she doing here?"

Uncle Jesse's pipe tasted bitter and he put it on the mantel. "Somebody brought her over. Maybe them folks in the ad. Brought her over and she got lost."

"Well, I found her." The boy's eyes were dry and the line of his mouth was straight. "I found her and finders, keepers."

"That's the saying all right and some folks hold to that."

"How you hold?"

"I ain't holding. You're doing the holding."

"But what you think I ought to do, Uncle Jesse?" His jaw was trembling again.

"Well, now — I rightly don't know. You can keep still about that dog and nothing mout never happen. Then again a heap of folks know about her and there's always that reward. This one you got to settle for yourself. But whichever way you jump, I'm jumping with you."

"If I keep her then that's all right with you?"

"If you think it's right to lay low and keep her, then it's you and me and the dog and ain't nothing going to bother you. They can bring the high sheriff. The governor even. Ain't nobody going to take no dog away from nobody unless that's how you want it."

"Then I'm going to keep her."

"If that's how it is, then let's fix some supper. A big bowl of oatmeal sounds good to me."

"Maybe those folks forgot about her by now. That's an old magazine and she been lost a long time."

"Some hot oatmeal and maybe some ham all chopped up in some eggs." Uncle Jesse went over to the stove and lit some splinters.

"Nobody around here reads magazines except Mister Cash and Gates. That traveling man may not be back for months. So I'm going to keep her," Skeeter repeated.

"Ain't no use keep talking about it. Chop up the ham."

The boy got the ham and sliced off a piece and cut it into little bitty pieces and then he broke four eggs and mixed the ham with the eggs, but his eyes had filled again and finally he said, "Uncle Jesse, I ain't hungry."

He turned away from the stove and went over to the front door and Lady jumped off the bed and they went out into the yard.

The boy sat on a stump and his dog put her head on his leg. "Isis of the Blue Nile." He said it harshly, hoping that she would refuse the name.

But her ears came up and she cocked her head and looked at him.

"You know it. You know it all right."

He reached down and picked her up and she licked his face and his neck and began chuckling. Then the conflict was within him; the tyranny of a boy's conscience.

"Finders, keepers; losers, weepers."

No. Suppose you had lost the dog and they had found her.

"Well, I don't care. She's mine."

She'll never be yours. Not really yours.

A feeling of despair and loneliness almost overwhelmed him. His sobs brought Lady closer to him and he put his arms around her and opened the floodgates of his misery. "My li'l old puppy dog. Poor li'l old puppy dog. But we got to do it."

He sniffed back his tears and got up. "We got to do it. And, besides, we'd get caught up with. They'd find out." The door to the cabin still was open and the light from the fireplace was yellow through the doorway and he saw Uncle Jesse moving about; and he felt comforted. He and Lady went back inside.

"Uncle Jesse, know what I aim to do?"

"Uh huh. Get word to them folks that you got their dog."

"How'd you know?"

"Just knew. Now, sit down and eat your supper."

"Ain't hungry. I don't know how to get in touch with those folks way up yonder."

"Just write 'em a letter."

"Letter take a long time. Want to get shed of it. Since I got to do it, I want to do it quick."

"Then maybe a telegram."

"Don't know nothing about a telegram. But Gates'll know. I'm going over and see Gates."

"Right now?"

"Soon as you get through your supper."

"I ain't hungry neither." Uncle Jesse looked around for his jacket.

Skeeter lit the lantern and said to Lady, "You stay here and watch things. Be back t'reckly."

He picked up the magazine and Lady followed them to the front porch and sat on the steps and they walked away toward the bayou. Uncle Jesse walked ahead and held the lantern high. There was neither moon nor stars that night.

The old man was climbing in the skiff when they heard the noise up ahead and they looked at each other quickly and were still. "'Gator?" the boy whispered.

"Too loud for a 'gator. Somebody fishing, mor'n likely. Catfish running. Maybe Gates Watson." Uncle Jesse cupped his hands and called out, "Who's that? Down the bayou? This here is Jesse Jackson."

"It's me—Gates Watson." The voice came back deep and echoing.

They walked down the bayou and found Gates setting out trotlines, stringing the lines across the bayou and baiting the gang hooks with fat meat and biscuit dough.

"On our way over to your place," Uncle Jesse said.

"What's wrong?" Gates looked from the old man to the boy. Something was bound to be wrong—swamp folks going visiting this time of night.

"It's Lady." Skeeter stooped by the lantern and found the place in the magazine and handed it to Gates.

He scarcely glanced at it and handed it back and bent over his trotlines again. "One of those fancy kennels." He jerked a slipknot in one of his lines as though he was angry. "You telling, Claude? You telling them you found her?"

"Got to. She ain't mine so I'm bound to tell 'em. Aim to send a telegram. Figured you'd help us write it out, and me and Uncle Jesse could go to Pascagoula tomorrow and send it."

Gates said, "I'll be going into Pascagoula tomorrow. I'll send it, if you want me to."

"Just tell 'em you aim to send a telegram for Jesse Jackson and his nephew. About a dog. Then write it out pretty."

"You can count on it, Mr. Jesse."

"Now what you going to tell 'em?"

"That their Basenji has been found and where it is. That's all."

"That's the ticket," Uncle Jesse said. "That's the way to do it."

The boy looked into the face of his friend and his eyes widened in the knowledge of a truth. "Gates, you knew about Lady. It just hit me. You knew about her all along."

"What makes you say that?"

"The way you said that name. You didn't even study that magazine, but you just come out with that name easy as you please."

"I heard her in the swamp about the time you folks did. Then I saw her and knew that she didn't belong around here. A dog that couldn't bark. A dog that laughed. So I read up on it."

"Did you try to catch her?" Uncle Jesse asked.

"Yes, sir. I knew she was worth a lot of money."

"Why didn't you tell me, Gates?" Skeeter said. "How come you let me play like she was mine?"

"I just did, that's all. I was down by the spring looking for her the day you found her. I'd put out baits, but she wouldn't come to me. I saw her go to you and that's all there is to it."

"You knew a dog worth money like that must belong to someone. You should have told me. Wouldn't have been so hard to give her up at first."

"I wish now that I had. But I just couldn't, Claude. You had yourself a dog and I just couldn't throw you."

Skeeter turned away from both of them and started for home.

Gates said to Uncle Jesse, "He's aching, Mr. Jesse. I never saw anybody aching so hard."

"All dry inside," Uncle Jesse said. "Like a water well dug deep and then run dry." He told Gates good night and caught up with the boy and they went home together.

The fire had died to embers and Uncle Jesse's bed was cold, but the boy's was warm because his dog had slept there while he was gone.

CHAPTER 6

THE MAN from the kennel was named Walden Grover and he flew down to Mobile and rented a truck and drove out to the swamp. Skeeter and Lady were not at home and Uncle Jesse was surprised that the man showed up so quick.

He asked the stranger in, but Mr. Grover was distant and ill at ease. He stood at the steps and wanted to know all about the Basenji and when he could pick her up. "Is she in good shape?"

"Slick as el'em," Uncle Jesse said. "She and the boy went across the river. They'll be back in a little while."

"How's she eating?" Mr. Grover felt embarrassed in the old man's presence and didn't know why. He glanced around at the bare yard and the drab house. He had read about such folks as Uncle Jesse, the red-necks, the pecker-woods, and he wanted to get this over with and be away from there.

Uncle Jesse slouched against the post that supported the roof over the porch. "She been eatin' same stuff as us. Oatmeal and bacon fat and things like that."

Mr. Grover grimaced. "A valuable dog like that should have meat once a day."

He took out a package of cigarettes and offered one to Uncle Jesse and the old man took it. He didn't smoke cigarettes, but Gates Watson did and he might as well give it to Gates.

"I have been authorized to pay a fifty-dollar reward for the dog," Mr. Grover said. "That's a lot of money."

He had been authorized to pay a hundred-dollar reward and if that were not acceptable he was to hire an attorney and recover the dog by law. But if he could save his employer money, that would be fine. Fifty dollars was a big sum to these people. He said again, "It's a lot of money. I'll pay as soon as I get the dog. I don't want any trouble."

Uncle Jesse was baffled. "Trouble? Won't be no trouble, Mr. Grover. Soon as the boy gets back, you'll get your dog."

"No offense." Some of the crispness went out of Mr. Grover's voice. "I just thought you might not want to give up the dog."

"Don't. But she's yours."

"Naturally, I hate to take a dog away from a boy." He was on the defensive now. "I don't like this any more than you do."

"I tell you what," Uncle Jesse said. "We weren't expecting you for a few more days, and I wouldn't want him to walk up on us, and me or you have to up and tell him that you'd come for his dog. Just up and tell him like that. Now you just drive back down the road to Lystra and go to Mr. Alpheus Evans' store and tell ol' Cash you're a friend of mine and wait there, and me and the boy and the dog will be in just as soon as he gets back."

"All right." Mr. Grover reached for his hat. "If that's the way you want it then that's the way we'll do it. I just want to get it over with. I want to get back to Mobile tonight."

He went to Cash's store and introduced himself and Cash told him to make himself at home and sold him a can of salmon and some cheese and crackers for lunch, and a bottle of pop.

Along about the middle of the afternoon Uncle Jesse and Skeeter walked into the store and Lady was with them.

The dog was sleek because Skeeter had washed her in the bayou and had fed her the best food in the cabin, and the boy was sleek, too, because Uncle Jesse had cut his hair and wet it down and parted it.

Mr. Grover glanced expertly at Lady and knew that she was in good shape and then looked closely at the boy and saw that there was no bitterness in Skeeter and that pleasured him. Cash was the first to speak. "Jesse, this here is Mr. Grover. You two done met."

"Howdied but ain't shook." Uncle Jesse offered his hand and then introduced Skeeter.

The boy shook hands manlike. "Sorry I was late," he said. "Didn't know you'd get here so soon and me and Lady were out in the swamp just messin' around. Here's your dog."

"She looks good." Mr. Grover swallowed the lump that was in his throat and spoke his feelings. "I'm sorry about this, son. In a way, I wish we'd never found out about her."

"Oh, that's all right. That's the way things are." Being a boy, he was a realist. Grownups are the sentimentalists. "I know'd all along I couldn't keep her."

Mr. Grover reached in his pocket and took out a roll of bills. "This is the reward. You can count it."

"Ain't no use of that." Skeeter held the money in his hand and stared down at it and then at Lady. A ten-dollar bill was on the outside of the roll and the boy never before had seen a ten-dollar bill.

"It's a lot of money," Mr. Grover said.

"It's a lot of dog," Skeeter said.

Uncle Jesse looked at the money in the boy's hand and blinked slowly. "That's more than fifty dollars."

"It's a hundred dollars. It's like Skeeter said — she's a lot of dog and the man I work for is a pretty good fellow."

Mister Cash spoke up. "Suppose you'll be breeding her."

"That's right."

"Then I was just thinking. With all that money maybe Skeeter here could buy one of her puppies."

Mr. Grover was caught off base. One of Lady's puppies would be worth much more than a hundred dollars, but then, like he had said, the man he worked for was a pretty good fellow and Mr. Grover would see what could be done about it, and told them so.

"No," Skeeter said. "That's rightly nice, but I reckon not. Don't want one of her puppies. Then I'd always be thinking about her."

"I know how you feel," Mr. Grover said, and he really did. "Maybe, though, you'll be up my way sometime and come around and see us."

"It's a long way," Uncle Jesse said. "A long way up yonder, but now with all the money you might like to go up there and see that country."

The money still was in Skeeter's hand and he continued to stare at it. "There just ain't no telling what I might do. Someday I aim to get on a train and go plum' to Atlanta and then just keep going — looking at things."

Uncle Jesse turned his head away and toward the door of the store and beyond was the swamp, the wild geese flying high and calling and the sandpipers to the wing and away.

Mr. Grover said, "I suppose it's settled. I'll take the dog on back to Mobile."

"It's settled," Skeeter said.

Mr. Grover stepped to the door and called the dog, calling her Blue, and she looked at him and then moved closer to Skeeter and rubbed against his leg. "Come on, Blue." Mr. Grover moved to pick her up.

Lady snapped at him and Uncle Jesse and Cash exchanged glances and Skeeter rebuked his dog.

"Lead her out to the truck, will you, son?" Mr. Grover asked.

Skeeter looked at Uncle Jesse and the old man nodded and Skeeter said, "You paid me fair. I'll take her out."

He tossed the money on the counter and spoke to Lady and she followed him willingly out of the door, and Mr. Grover shook hands with Uncle Jesse and Cash Evans and went out also.

He said nothing to Skeeter on the way to the truck. He couldn't think of anything to say. He wanted to be away from there and to forget it and knew that he never could. He lowered the tailgate of the truck and there was a crate on the bed of the truck and he nodded toward it. "She goes in there. Need any help?"

"No, sir. You go on around and get in the cab."

Mr. Grover offered his hand again and then he walked around to the cab and Skeeter did not look at Lady at all but opened the door of the crate and spoke to her. "Heah, Lady." She bounded to him. "Up!" She leaped into the crate.

The boy locked the crate and Lady poked her nose through the bars and the boy rubbed her head. She tried to move closer

to him, but the bars held her and she clawed at them. A look of fear came into her eyes and she fastened them on the boy, wistfully at first and then pleadingly. There was no bark of protest, no howl of anguish, for her misery was sealed in her throat. Then slowly her eyes filled.

"Don't cry, Lady." The boy reached out to pat her and Mr. Grover, looking back, saw the gesture and thought that it was a signal for him to drive away, and the truck moved off and left the boy standing there in the dust.

Skeeter waited until the truck was out of sight and then he walked back into the store and picked up the money from the counter and went on to the back of the store where Uncle Jesse and Cash were waiting, and Cash said, "They'll take care of her. She's a valuable dog."

"Yes, sir. Reckon so. Never got a chance to shoot over her. But I had myself a dog, though."

"Had yourself a dog," Cash said. "Best dog I ever seen and I've seen myself a lot of dogs."

The storekeeper reached to a shelf and took down a box of vanilla wafers and passed them around. "Gates was in here early this morning. Me and him thought maybe we'd send ol' Mill over to your place and let you keep him for me. I'll pay good."

"Reckon not," Uncle Jesse said. "We had us a dog."

"But I'll look after him, Uncle Jesse. Be good to have ol' Mill around and I'll do all the work."

"Figured you wouldn't want another dog around."

"I like ol' Mill. He barks and everything, like I'm used to." The boy reached for another of the vanilla wafers. "Lady never did really belong here. She'll be better off way up yonder. Yankees feed dogs meat every day. That's what the man told Uncle Jesse."

"Gates will bring ol' Mill over tomorrow if your Uncle Jesse don't mind."

"Don't mind. Whatever the boy wants."

Skeeter felt in his pocket where he had put the money. "How much them Roebuckers cost for Uncle Jesse? Good'uns."

"Good'uns will ruin the hundred dollars. Some cheaper, but good'uns come high."

"Now, wait a minute." Uncle Jesse wiped crumbs from his mouth. "I don't want 'em that bad. I just been doing a lot of big-talking about roastin' ears and hicker' nuts and things like that. Didn't mean it. I'm doing all right."

"I want the best ones," Skeeter said to Mister Cash, "if it takes ever' cent of that hundred dollars."

Uncle Jesse knew that he must say no more about it, for a gift must not be debated.

"Order them tonight," Mister Cash said. "And there'll be enough left over, mor'n likely, for a down payment on a twenty-gauge."

"That's what I want. Me and ol' Mill will hunt us some birds."

Cash Evans raked a match across the sole of his shoe and lit the coal-oil stove on which his coffeepot stayed all the time. "Figured a little coffee might go good before y'all went back."

"I'd like a cup of coffee," Uncle Jesse said.

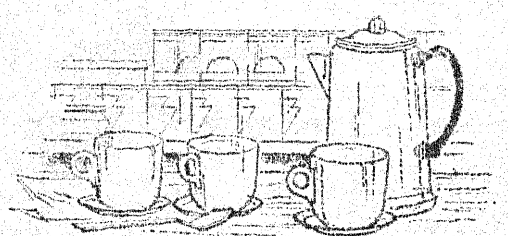
Cash got three cups and put them on the counter and soon the coffee was boiling and he filled the cups and reached for a can of condensed milk.

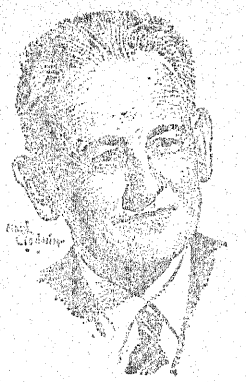
"Drink mine black," Uncle Jesse said.

"I was thinking about Claude."

"Drinks his black, too. Claude does. Black and stout."

The boy watched the men and did exactly as they did and poured some of the coffee into his saucer and blew on it and sipped it. It was very bitter but he drank it all and then he and Uncle Jesse told Mister Cash good-bye, and they walked out of the store and headed for the swamp and home.

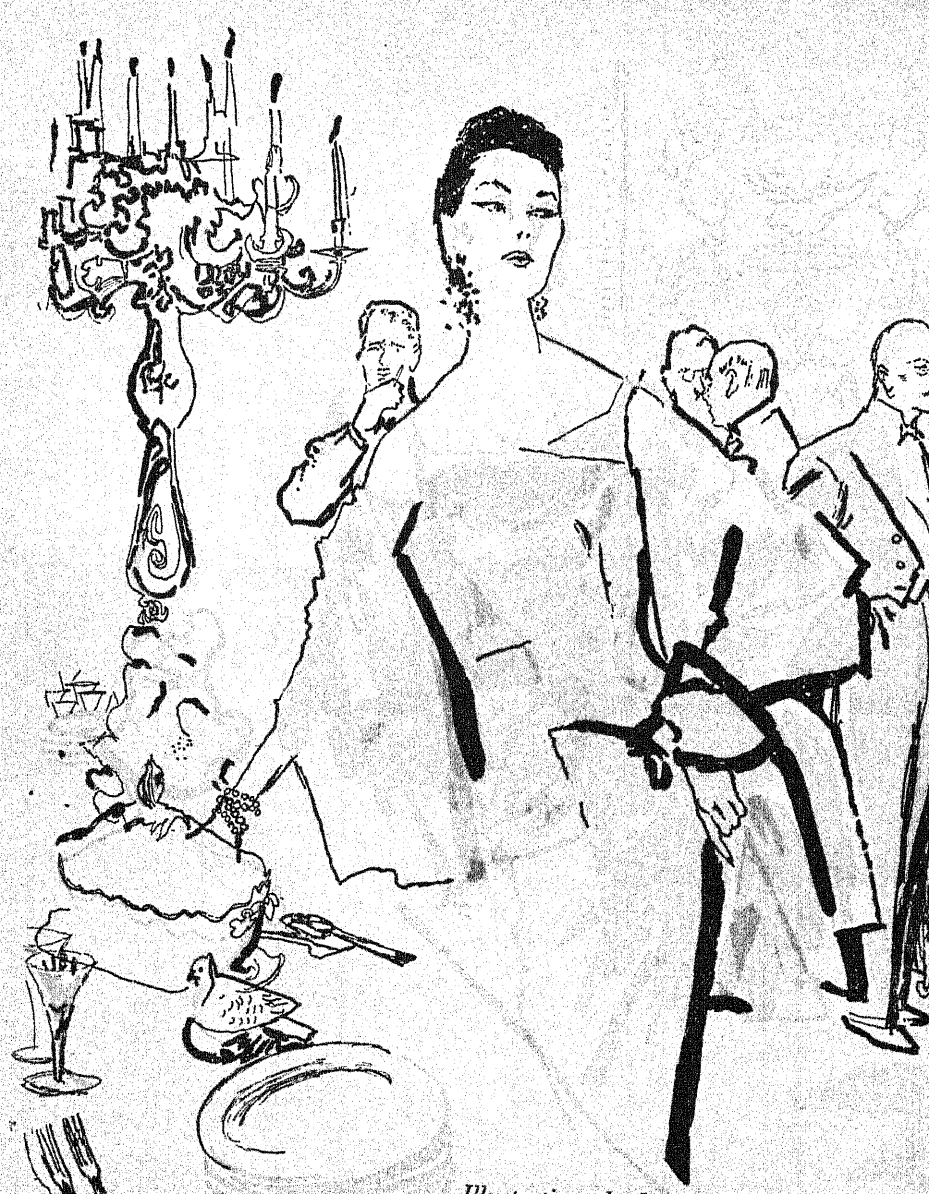




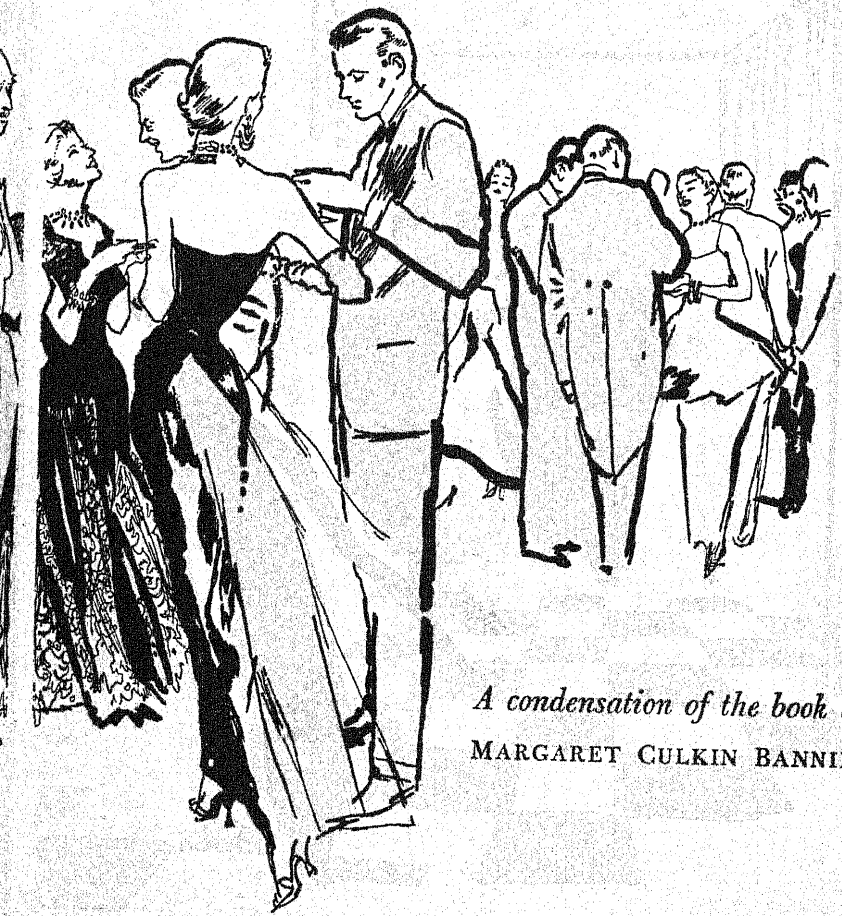
James Street

SHORTLY AFTER completing *Good-bye, My Lady,* James Street died of a heart attack in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where he had lived with his family since 1946. Born in Lumberton, Mississippi, he was, at nineteen, the youngest Baptist preacher in the United States. Later he worked as a newspaperman until free-lance success in the late 1930's enabled him to devote all his time to writing novels and short stories. He will be remembered for such books as *The Biscuit Eater, Tap Roots, The High Calling, The Velvet Doublet* and *The Gauntlet*— the latter a novel about a Southern minister which came to be known as a Protestant *Going My Way.*

THE DOWRY



Illustrations by Juliette Kida Renault



A condensation of the book by

MARGARET CULKIN BANNING

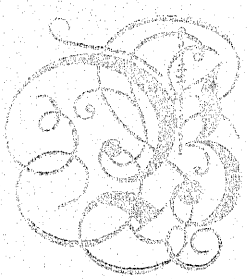
"The Dowry," copyright 1954, 1955 by Margaret Culkin Banning, is published at $3.50 by Harper & Brothers, 49 E. 33 St., New York 16, N. Y.

KAY RYLAND's dowry was her earning power. This and her deep love for Stephen were what she brought to their marriage. In the early days, without her wages Stephen could not have finished law school and made his start in politics. Later, the earnings from her successful business made possible the graceful manner in which the Rylands lived. By any standard, Kay Ryland was a busy and a happy woman. And then, suddenly, an abyss yawned at her feet and she realized her marriage and her career were both at stake.

The situation of the working wife is complicated by scores of delicate pressures and tensions, from without as well as within the home. And her name is legion—for more than half of America's twenty million working women are married.

In *The Dowry* Mrs. Banning has explored a difficult and widespread problem and made of it an absorbing novel. Who knows how many readers will find answers to their own questions here?

CHAPTER 1



BEFORE SHE WOKE her husband Kay drew back the blue woven curtains to see what the day was like, and if the wind she could hear was rough or gay. It was March, and the adolescent season did not know what to do with all its energy. Their house was handsomely placed on a ridge of land that fell away into a wooded ravine at one side, where a grove of white birch trees still had rags of snow clinging to the roots. I should have planted crocuses, she thought. I meant to but I never had the time. I will this year, she promised herself, her glance turning to the city in the distance, massing closer and growing higher as it drew near the golden dome and white shoulders of the state capitol.

It always delighted her to see so much from these windows, to be able to stand there and possess city and country in her glance. It continued to surprise her. For she had never cast off the memory of the cramped places where she had once lived with Stephen, nor the worse ones without him. Now they owned the right to this view, to these generous windows and lavish draperies — all the space and comfort they had ever dreamed of.

Stephen slept more soundly than Kay did, so it was she who usually woke him. As she did now, stroking his hair, admiring his look of strength even in rest, thanking the Lord for him, feeling a little sorry at having to rouse him out of such peace to a day's chances, and sitting down on the edge of the bed to complete the job with conversation.

"The time has come, poor guy. Come out of those lovely dreams. I had the craziest one last night. I had to fly across the ocean in a plane by myself — I was pilot and everything — and when I saw the plane at the airport it was like a canoe, with no top. I had to start the thing and take off, but I knew there was no way to stop it. It was a dreadful dream — what do you suppose was back of that one?"

"It's just the sort of thing you might do," he answered, reaching for her. "Come down. Come in."

"No, if I did I'd never get up."

"Why isn't that a good idea?"

"Fine talk. I have to get down to the shop early. And you said you were seeing the Governor at ten, remember. Better shake yourself. The news will be on in a minute. And Daphne's already brought the coffee." Tossing back her hair, she felt for the comb in the pocket of her dressing gown, for Stephen didn't like a woman to look unkempt, even in the morning.

This was the time when, together, they took hold of their separate days, after hearing the news of the world poured out of the little mirrored radio that stood on a table in front of the windows. Beside it was a silver pot of coffee. Now that they had two servants in the house, and Kay was working harder than ever, this morning indulgence was fair enough.

"You're looking very handsome, Mrs. Ryland."

She passed the compliment on to her robe. "I love this thing," said Kay.

Stephen had given her most of the negligees which she wore for this assembling of the day. One by one, over the years, whether he could afford them or not. This morning it was a dressing gown of the thinnest white wool, embroidered with blue fleur-de-lis, cut on long, straight lines like herself. She had a fine collection of robes, for Stephen knew what she liked and what looked best on her. None without pockets. Kay's delight in pockets was a family joke. She was worse than the boys. Her pockets filled up almost automatically with lists, samples, reading glasses, and she often could not find the thing she wanted because it would be deep in some other pocket.

She handed Stephen his big, steaming cup and joined her listening to his, knowing almost certainly how he would feel about this news or that. This morning men stationed in Korea, Paris, Madrid, Rome and Washington told what was happening in their succinct, practiced manner. The news was always alive and real to both of them. Stephen had been in the Pacific area during the Second World War. He was familiar with the hazards of the immediate struggle in Korea, and the habits and temper of the enemy. Equally well he understood the national political storms and currents. His life was moving along with these. What happened in Washington often affected action in the state legislature, in which Stephen sat and which was now in session.

A reporter from Washington spoke last, mentioning the Ides of March and the fatality of income taxes, due tomorrow. Kay did not have to be reminded. She turned the dial and said, "It may be funny to him. I don't find it so comical! Steve, Mr. Crum said that he would have our revised return ready this morning. Just under the wire. You were right, the new ruling on deductions will take off a little. But it's still going to be more than a twenty-thousand total — isn't that horrible? That means about twelve thousand more for me, in addition to what I've already paid on the estimate."

"I was afraid he couldn't whittle it down very much. If he's made out the return in its final form, I'll stop by your office and sign it right after lunch."

"He says it really is much better for us to make a joint return."

"Sure it is," said Stephen. "The way I make money for my wife is by earning less than she does and pulling down her taxes. Isn't that something?"

"It will take nearly every cent I have in my savings account to pay that dreadful tax."

"Lucky girl to have a savings account. I'll have to borrow for mine."

"Oh, no, Steve — why would you?"

"To keep out of jail," he said cheerfully. "I'll be nicked for at least two thousand."

"But, darling — how did you get so low in funds? You haven't

had any big expenses lately, have you? Except the school fees for the boys. You knew about those."

"That doesn't make them any less. There have been a lot of things to take care of, as usual."

"What sort of things?"

"I can't run off the list without looking at my checkbook. Business jobs. Household bills."

"But most of those come to me."

"Yes, I know how much you pay out," said Steve, "but let's not go over that again. It's all wrong and I know it. It's completely out of balance."

"That wasn't what I was thinking of—"

She was thinking of his being short of money. Steve shouldn't be humiliated like that, not now. There were embarrassments that were worse than deprivations, and Kay could never forget how harassing they were. To be careful to buy only where you had credit, to avoid situations that might need cash, to keep counting what you had in your pocket or in your dwindling account, to meet people who remembered that you owed them money . . .

She went on, quickly and earnestly, "Look, Steve, you don't have to do that. I won't be down to bedrock, even after these taxes, and I have some pretty big accounts outstanding that are bound to come in before long. Why don't you let me take care of this tax payment for both of us? You can make it up to me on the June installment. I hate to have you borrowing at the bank."

"Why don't you leave that to me, Kay?"

She felt the warning. She could not see it for there was no frown on his narrow, handsome face. Nor hear it. His voice sounded casual. But she felt an intangible door of pride and dignity close against her. He was behind it and she was on the other side, feeling cold.

She poured herself more coffee, and then refilled the cup he held out.

It was after a minute that he spoke again. "I ought to be making more money, that's the whole thing. And I could. But while the legislature is in session I can't practice law. Now that I'm Speaker



of the House the job isn't ever done, even when the session is over. I shouldn't have let them saddle me with that job."

"Of course you should have. You were far and away the best man for it. The Governor wanted you there. It puts you in line for bigger things. Why, even the members of your own law firm said you should take it."

"Of course. It's valuable to any firm that handles corporation business to have one of its members with an eye on the legislature. But in our firm, the younger men get flat salaries plus a percentage of the fees for law business which they personally handle. I'm bound to lose out on that arrangement. In the entire biennium I get three thousand for political work that takes more than half my time. And about seventy-five hundred a year from the firm, mostly for odd jobs that nobody else wants to handle. While Ralph Lamson probably pulls down a cool ten thousand dollars as his cut for handling the Forman divorce case."

"I like what you do better." Kay looked at the clock and became alert. Her time, their time, was more than gone. "We must hurry.

Ida will be waiting breakfast, and she's feeling miserable. This is a big day for me. Peter Philemon is going to be in town, did I tell you?"

"No. What's he here for?"

"I think he has a new project, and I hope it means a big job for me. Doing a hotel for him in the South."

"You're taking on too much, Kay. You ought to slow down."

"I'm going to, when we get a little further ahead of the game."

"What's the use in killing yourself?"

"I don't intend to. I like my life too well. And my man."

"Dreaming about airplanes you can't stop. You're nervous. You're thin, too."

"I like to be thin. If I get a contract for Phil's new hotel, maybe I'll take a year off when it's done. I'd love to have us take Mark and Colin for a long trip on their vacation — to some place where you and I have never been. I might even take Cynthia — "

"Cynthia? Oh — " He smiled just as she was smiling. "You're a fraud. I'd almost forgotten about Cynthia."

"I haven't," said Kay.

"Sweet girl," he said, and kissed the top of her head, and went to his shower.

Kay moved quickly, making herself ready, and still thinking of Cynthia. Who didn't exist. She was the girl they had wanted and hoped for. They used to talk about her so much that she had to have a name, and they had fixed on Cynthia. Sometimes they almost used to think they had her.

Cynthia had become less probable after Kay's operation five years ago. Not prohibited nor impossible. The doctor had assured them of that. Kay remembered again how she had worried before Dr. Lenroot had told her. In the first years, when the boys had been born almost as fast as she could have them, and she had been trying to hold onto her job at the department store — and absolutely had to until Steve was admitted to the bar — it was often a great relief to find out that she was not pregnant. But when she had feared that she might never have another child, the possibility had seemed bitterly disappointing.

But I still might have her, thought Kay. Plenty of women have

children when they are nearly thirty-seven. I could take six months off — or at least the whole summer, not this coming one, of course, but a year from now. Unless Steve should run for governor next year. That wouldn't be the best time for Cynthia. I'd have to show myself with Steve at meetings. And a campaign would take a lot of money too. . . .

CHAPTER 2

STEPHEN RYLAND's appointment with the Governor was at the Mansion instead of at the executive offices in the capitol, which gave it a private status. It was an indication that Governor Elston wanted to talk to him without having reporters scouting around to find out what the conversation might concern. Stephen was informed, in the Governor's first warning sentence, that what he was about to reveal was confidential. He took that with a grain of salt when he heard what it was.

If the aged Senator Ferebee had made up his mind at last to retire from the United States Senate at the end of his present term, which would expire next year, plenty of others would know it by now. Governor Elston was treating it in a hush-hush way so that he himself could pretend to proper surprise and regret when the time came. Senator Ferebee's prestige and power of patronage were still so important that Elston would never consider running against him. But if the old man stepped down, support for the Governor as his successor would need to be lined up and consolidated before other candidates began to divide up the field.

The Governor did not approach the matter so directly. He told Stephen that considerable pressure was being brought to bear on him to run for the Senate next year, but that he had not yet decided whether he would or not.

"It involves considerable sacrifice," he said. "As you know, Steve, I have many plans and projects for the good of the state, if, that is, the voters should want me to continue as governor for another term."

"There's no doubt of that, Governor," said Stephen.

"It would be quite a wrench for Mrs. Elston, too. We've been very happy here at the Mansion for the past three years. She loves her little garden. And Radisson has always been her home. I'm afraid I'd have a hard time persuading Marcia to go to Washington."

Stephen took no stock in this show of reluctance, knowing well that the Senate seat had long been Governor Elston's ambition and his intention.

He said, with a grin, "They don't provide any Mansions for Senators, unfortunately."

"Oh, as far as that goes, this house is a liability. Only two thousand dollars allowed for its maintenance during the term. That may have been all right when the house was built, thirty years ago. But it's not a drop in the bucket today."

That needn't worry you very much, Stephen said to himself. Your wife has plenty of money. There were mocking stories still in circulation about the careful way Hugh Elston had catalogued the rich girls in the city twenty years ago. He had finally married into the Wendell family, getting beauty as well as money.

Stephen said that he supposed the Mansion was a big obligation, but he had never thought much about that.

"Might be that you'd have to think about it one day, Steve."

"I don't believe I could afford to think. My big trouble is that I have no time to practice law."

"The session will soon be over. And," said the Governor with a chuckle, "the decorating business is doing very well, isn't it?"

"That never enters into my figuring," Stephen answered rather curtly.

"No, of course not. But I have great admiration for that clever wife of yours. These modern women all want careers. Mrs. Elston is old-fashioned, completely engrossed in her home, wouldn't be happy otherwise. Well—back to our muttons, Steve. As I say, I had this information about Ferebee from a source very close to him. I felt you should know about it because you're becoming a leader in the party in this state, and if the Senator bows out it's going to affect the whole state organization, as well as next year's ticket."

There was no promise of support for Stephen as candidate for governor in what Governor Elston went on to say, but the younger man knew that he was being alerted, that the lightning might strike. He did not dislike Governor Elston and considered him a good governor in many ways. Hugh Elston was honest, even if in him that virtue was born of caution. He understood organization and could build a tight political house. He was kindly, friendly, impressive, always at the right times.

But he was not so good a governor as another man might be. That thought was stirring in Stephen now, as it had before when he had seen change and improvement by-passed in the state. The penal system needed a complete overhauling. The highway department was wasting money. The natural resources of forests and mines needed to be conserved more strictly, no matter whose toes were stepped on. But Hugh Elston's first consideration was never to offend anyone of importance.

What it gets down to, Stephen told himself, is that he intends to go to Washington, and to hand-pick his successor. He will expect him to be grateful and useful. To keep all the fences out here mended so that he can stay in the Senate just as long as he wants to. That part of it would be all right. But if I should get the nod—and it would be hard to get anywhere without it—I'm not going to be hamstrung. I'd have to be my own man. He knows that. He's not quite sure that I'm a safe guy to promote and that's why he's beating around the bush.

It was obvious that the Governor wanted him to line up some of the legislators from various districts so that they would be more or less committed when the Elston bandwagon began to roll. When the interview was over, Stephen went down the driveway to his car, fully aware of what was expected of him. It was a kind of test of his loyalty and influence.

Beyond a low, precise hedge he could see the "little garden" so loved by Mrs. Elston. It was glowing with the opened chalices of thousands of early tulips and daffodils. Certainly more than the Governor's salary was being spent on the Mansion and its grounds now. Stephen figured it out as he drove down to the city: The salary is twelve thousand a year. The house is his, as

long as he's governor. But he has to staff it out of his own pocket and there's a lot of entertaining. To be governor of this state a man almost must have private means.

I'd have to resign from the firm if I should be elected governor, so what I get from legal work now would be out the window. It wouldn't be possible to keep the boys at Madison. Too bad, for it's a good school, just what the kids need at this age.

And Kay would have to quit working. A governor's wife has a big job handling the social end. We'd have to sell the house we're in, probably take a loss on it too. But Kay would go along with that, keen as she is about the place. She'd love turning herself loose on the old Mansion. What would burn her up would be shutting up her shop, now that she's making a bundle of money. We'd certainly have to cut corners to live on that salary.

What did the Governor mean by that crack about how well her decorating business is doing? Does he have the idea that Kay keeps us going? She doesn't have to work unless she wants to. Not any more. Not if we hadn't bought that house and taken on a bunch of servants. Not if we weren't scaled up so high. That's what does it, that and the taxes. The last thought sharply reminded Stephen that he must stop at the bank if he were going to pay his share of the income tax and not be overdrawn.

His request for a short-term loan was pleasantly granted by a vice-president who was a member of his own club in the city. They exchanged bitter views on taxes and the banker told him dryly that he was not the only one in the same financial fix this week.

The legislature was not meeting until two o'clock and there was time to spend an hour or more in his law office. The firm of Jelke, Clarke and Reid occupied the entire top floor of the building which also housed the bank, and he went up immediately.

A secretary was waiting for him. "Mr. Jelke asked me to tell you, Mr. Ryland, that he would like to see you as soon as possible if you came in."

"Right away," said Stephen, and paused only to hang up his coat and hat before going down the full length of gold-lettered office doors to open the final one on a large corner room which

was reserved for the senior partner. He was a man nearing seventy, whose manner was as highly polished as the heavy mahogany furniture of his office.

"Ah, there you are, Stephen," he said. "Come in. I was afraid that affairs of state might detain you all morning. Are you free for a few minutes?"

"Yes, sir, quite free." Stephen was aware that a woman sat on the other side of the long table in front of the elder lawyer but he did not look her way until Mr. Jelke introduced him.

"Mrs. Jefferson Bowes," he said. "Lisa, this is Mr. Stephen Ryland, one of our associates. He is also a member of the state legislature. In fact, he is presiding officer of the House of Representatives."

Stephen saw that the woman was young, beautiful and expensive. He felt her interest circling him. It was like something alive. Her composure was perfect but he could feel her assessing his age, attractions and virility.

"So you make the laws too?" The words were thrown in with the smile that found him acceptable.

"Not personally," he said, "and sometimes we even try to keep laws from being made."

"Far too many are made," stated Mr. Jelke, taking over the reins of the conversation again, "that's certain. Well, I must proceed with the matter in hand, Stephen. I'm sure you recall our late distinguished client, Mr. Cyrus Wendell."

"By reputation, of course. I never met him, sir."

"We suffered a great personal loss when he passed on. Mrs. Bowes is his granddaughter and was named as the principal beneficiary under his will. She is also sole executor. She has just returned from Europe to confer with us about settling the estate."

Then she must have been the Hanford girl, Stephen was thinking. Lisa Hanford. Not so young as I thought she was. She looks about twenty-five but she's older than that.

"Mr. Reid was handling legal matters for the estate. I've just been telling Mrs. Bowes that only last week he suffered a heart attack and cannot leave his home for some time. We want to give Mrs. Bowes every possible assistance and to expedite the legal

procedure as best we can, though of necessity these matters take considerable time."

"I realize that," she said quietly. "I had to settle my husband's estate before I came back here and I know something of what's involved."

Your husband killed himself, Steve remembered. Yes, somewhere in Europe. The story had been in the papers and he had heard some talk about it. He wished he had paid more attention to the details.

Mr. Jelke went on, "Since you have handled the administration of other estates and are familiar with matters of probate, Stephen, you seemed the logical one to take this over."

I've handled only small estates, Stephen said to himself. The senior partners always take on the big ones. I'm getting a real break. There should be a big fee in this job. The money won't come in until the final settlement, but at least I'd know it was coming. And if this governorship thing comes to a head, I might be able to salt something away to use in the campaign.

"I'll do my best," he said.

"Mr. Reid thought well of your handling the matter. He will be available for consultation by telephone at certain hours. He says that the inventory has been made."

"How long will you be in the city, Mrs. Bowes?" asked Stephen.

"As long as necessary. Indefinitely."

"You'll find a visit at the Mansion very interesting," said Mr. Jelke. "So many people come and go. Delightful dinner parties. You realize, Stephen, that Mrs. Bowes is a niece of the Governor's wife?"

He did now. Stephen diagramed the family quickly in his mind. One of Cyrus Wendell's daughters had married the Governor, another one married a Mr. Hanford. The Hanfords had cut quite a swath at one time.

"I won't impose myself on Aunt Marcia," said Lisa Bowes. "I left my luggage at the hotel when I arrived this morning. I thought I might stay at the old house. I remember it so well, though I haven't been in it for years. I came here first. You see, I had no keys."

"Mr. Reid said that the chauffeur and his wife — I believe they both benefit under the will — have stayed on as caretakers, living over the garage. They would have keys. But I wouldn't advise your taking up residence in the house, Lisa."

"Isn't it still furnished?"

"I assume so. Everything has been awaiting your arrival and instructions. But the house is a very large place for one person. And you'll find that the neighborhood has changed — not for the better — in the past few years. Your grandfather had become more or less of a recluse in later life and was indifferent to that."

"I'm rather indifferent to neighborhoods myself," she said.

You've probably seen all sorts, thought Stephen. He was piecing together facts, memories and impressions about Lisa Bowes and her relatives. This girl had been quite a character. When she was quite young, she had married a jockey or a groom. Later she had married Bowes. He was in the diplomatic service and that was one reason for all the publicity when he killed himself. She might have had several husbands in between. But to look at her, you'd never guess that she was the type to make trouble or lose her head. She looked as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth.

Lisa Bowes stood up, gathering her furs with a single gesture that placed them where they should be on her slim shoulders.

"I mustn't keep you, Mr. Jelke. You've been good to give me all this time. I'll go to see the house anyway." She turned to Stephen. "And you will tell me what I must do? And when? And how?"

"I'll see what has been done. Then, at your convenience, I'll go over the formalities with you and get your instructions."

"Can it be done soon?"

"I'll get right after it," he promised.

"I'm confident that I'm leaving you in good hands, Lisa," said Mr. Jelke urbanely. Then, rather out of context, he asked, "And how is your talented wife, Stephen?"

"Very well. Much too busy."

Then he answered the curiosity in the eyes of Lisa Bowes. "My wife's in the decorating business," he said, and felt oddly defensive. He had an irrelevant desire to tell this woman, who

was here to collect the money her grandfather had piled up, that although Kay had a business of her own it wasn't because her husband couldn't take care of her.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROOMS in which Kay Ryland worked, choosing and directing the furnishing of houses, hotels, public buildings — once even a ship — were on the upper floor of a modern building that to a passer-by seemed to be made almost entirely of glass and shining steel.

Her secretary, Janice Ford, had a desk in the elegant display room. Davy Vail, Kay's temperamental assistant, who liked to work with color and fabrics but not with clients, also made it his headquarters. Kay had kept for herself a small private office which windowed on the sky. It was uncluttered, although colorful bolts of materials were ranged on shelves along two walls. On the dark oak desk where she worked were a couple of plaster-of-Paris objects that the boys had made for her in kindergarten, a hen and a rabbit, now chipped and dirt-grained, but indispensable as tokens of love and childhood. Spread out before her was the joint income-tax form. Studying the figures, Kay found it incredible that, between them, she and Steve had earned more than sixty thousand dollars in a year.

Janice Ford interrupted her thoughts. "Will I be fired if I ask to get off early today?"

"Today? Oh, heavens, Jan, we're terribly rushed. You know I have that appointment with Mr. Philemon this afternoon. Then I promised Davy I'd go out to okay the installation at the Barnard house and I have to catch up on dictation later — some of it is urgent. I can't spare you today," Kay said impatiently. Then, as she looked again at her secretary's face, she asked, "Why? Joe isn't getting back from Korea by any chance?"

"Yes, he is. He got to San Francisco and called me last night. He's flying home today."

Janice had an easy frankness with her boss. She sometimes seemed a plain, not very well-groomed girl. Strands of fine brown



hair were apt to work loose from a bun that was intended to be smooth and inclusive, and her face would grow pale and a little moist after a couple of hours at the typewriter. But Kay Ryland, who knew beauty when she saw it, and never discounted it in other women because it might be different from her own dark vitality, thought Janice was often beautiful. Steve couldn't see it — for Jan was not glamorous. Her beauty was in her naturalness. Kay saw that quality now.

"Then, of course," said Kay, "go along. Leave when you must. How much time will Joe have?"

"Three weeks."

"Are you going to marry him while he's home?"

"We don't know yet," said Janice, with a lovely blush. "We have to talk over so many things. It depends on whether Joe thinks we could swing it."

"Don't you think so?"

"Of course I do. It's dreadful this way. Suppose something happened to Joe — I'd never forgive myself. We couldn't have much of a place to live in for a while but what do we care?"

"But with his pay and you working — "

"Joe's always helped his mother out. She's a widow. She has some survivors social security and a little insurance, but he has to come to the rescue every month. That's all right — if we only have one room, it would be enough. And of course I'll keep on working until Joe gets out of the service and finds a good job."

"Well, I should think you could manage."

"Joe's mother has made him think it's a queer arrangement to have a wife who'd keep on working. And Joe's the kind of man who doesn't like it. But it's the only thing to do for a while. When we can afford it, I'll quit, of course."

"It's sometimes hard to stop working."

Jan laughed and said, "It wouldn't be for me! Not that I don't simply love working for you, Mrs. Ryland, but when I get a home that's all I'd ever want. Of course, with someone like you, who's tops, it's different. You can have your beautiful home and family and everything."

"Well, give Joe my best, won't you?"

"I certainly will. And thank you so much. I hate running off when you're so busy," said Jan happily, "but you understand how it is?"

"I had a husband in the last war. I ought to," answered Kay.

STEVE used to call her whenever he got into port. She had lived for years waiting for his calls. Suddenly and vividly she remembered the time she had sat through a whole night on the stairs in that apartment house — with one ear listening for the children — waiting for the telephone on the landing to bring her his voice. There was no phone in the two-room flat she was renting and she couldn't be sure that the landlady would summon her. He had wired her to expect the call between eight and ten that night. It was nearly four in the morning when it came through. He couldn't come home. His ship was in drydock for repairs and he was the officer who had to oversee them. He wanted her to hop on a plane and come to him. I want my wife, Steve had said. But she hadn't gone. She couldn't leave the children. She couldn't afford to lose her job. I used to be desperate sometimes, she thought. I'd go around muttering his name under my breath. It seemed to keep me going. I should never forget what it meant to live under that threat of maybe never seeing him again. Poor Jan has that ahead of her. But she'll have a few weeks anyway. The one makes up for the other, more than makes up. How happy she looked! What it does to you to be in love! You can have the best of the world in a few weeks. In a few days, if you have to.

Steve knows that as well as I do — yet we take so much for granted, Kay said to herself. We ought never to forget that there was a time when all we wanted was to stay alive and have each other again, and keep the children fed and happy. And we've done it.

He should be here by this time. He had promised to sign the return. She had been expecting him since lunch, which for her had been a sandwich and a carton of milk sent up from the restaurant downstairs. I wish he would come so I could get down to work, thought Kay, and Stephen arrived on the heels of her impatience.

"Have I kept you waiting?" he asked in an untroubled way.

"It didn't matter," she said. "Were you in a game at the club? You have a subtle look of winning."

"No. Unexpected business. Where's the bad news?"

"Right here."

He sat down opposite her and took up the tax return, his eyes moving slowly down the lines.

"Poor Kay," he said.

She didn't like the pity. She wanted him to be impressed by the total, as she had been.

"We took in a lot of money anyway."

"You did. Where's Crum's memo about my share of this?"

"It doesn't matter who made what, and I do wish you'd let me pay the whole thing this time, Steve."

He took out his checkbook without answering and she gave him the memorandum he had asked for. The thing which had been a triumph a few minutes before was now a burden, an unpleasant challenge between them. He laid down his check, signed the return and pushed both across to her.

"There you are," he said.

Gesture and words seemed unfair to her. She hadn't demanded this money from him. And now he was getting ready to go, adjusting the overcoat which he had worn too long but which still sat well on his fine shoulders. This had not been as it should be. There had been no satisfaction in having earned all that money, no praise, no mutual rejoicing. Sometimes he seemed to hold her success against her. Don't let him go like this, her heart told her mind. It will ruin the rest of the day.

"Where are you going now?"

"To the capitol. And I may be late getting home. After we adjourn I have to finish going over the inventory of an estate — the Wendell estate."

"That must be a lot of money. Who gets it all?"

"The granddaughter gets most of it. Mrs. Bowes. She was in the office this morning."

Kay said, "Why, I know who she is — Lisa Hanford. She lived here before she married. She was very glamorous when she was

a girl. Of course I never knew her, I wouldn't have, but she was always having her pictures in the paper, on a horse, sailing for Europe, or being presented at court. What does she look like now? Grim or still glamorous?"

He said with a laugh, "I'm no judge."

"Good-looking?"

"Very."

"Is she married?"

"A widow. Bowes killed himself. They were living in Europe."

A voice on the intercommunication system broke in. "Mrs. Ryland, Mr. Philemon is here."

"Ask him to come right in, Janice." She explained to Stephen, "We had an appointment at three."

"I'll run along."

"Say hello to Phil first."

Peter Philemon came in with the smell of his last cigar clinging as usual to his soft camel's-hair overcoat. He was a stocky man and slightly too heavy, energetic and deliberately masculine, bold-colored from his florid cheeks to his necktie.

"How's my best girl?" he began. "Hello, Steve. Can't you leave her alone even in the daytime?"

Steve responded with a grin and a handshake. Kay could feel her own silly flush.

She said, "This romantic rendezvous was only for income-tax purposes. We've just been signing our lives away."

Peter Philemon winked at Steve. "When it hurts, you know why. It means she's doing too well."

"She's working too hard," said Steve abruptly.

Philemon agreed. "I know. She drives herself."

Kay laughed. "That's fine talk from the slave driver who gives me sixty days to do a job that needs six months."

"For this one you can have the summer," said Philemon.

"Going to launch a new resort?" asked Steve.

"Yes, except that it's old," answered Philemon, and explained, "Forty years ago some fellow bought the top of a Carolina mountain for a hotel. He put in a swimming pool, staked out a golf course, built some beautiful dry stone walls and began to pour

concrete — and then he went broke. There the place sat, never finished. Nobody wanted to take a chance on it. But now you have people looking for resorts in the mountains. And a whole lot of them want a hotel where there's some style, without going out of the country. This is going to be a country club, and a family resort, and it will be able to take care of some conventions too, the kind that don't want to meet in a city and be rooked all around. Down there you have an all-year climate. There's a train stop a mile away and a nice little airfield nearby, so it's only four and a half hours from New York — three from Chicago. We tie the place in with our other hotels, put it all on the same bill if somebody wants a week-end in the mountains."

"That's certainly thinking of everything," said Kay.

"You'll want to go down and see what you'll have to work with," Philemon said.

"I'll have to," she said, "if I undertake it. All modern, Phil?"

He warned, "We've got to keep the cost within reason."

"That can be done more easily if I work right along with the architect and builders. Decorating isn't just a matter of choosing wall colors and furniture these days. It's structural. You'll get me the blueprints as soon as possible, won't you?"

"I thought you were going to let up a little, Kay," said Stephen.

"I am, darling. But this is really something. Next year, when your own plans get under way — ".

He stopped her. "Never mind that now. I'll go along. This shoptalk is way over my head. Well, Phil, good luck to you."

"And to you, boy. How are politics? I've heard you mentioned as coming up very fast in the political game."

"Mention's cheap," said Steve.

As she watched the two men bantering, the feeling of impasse between herself and Stephen diminished in Kay. It didn't amount to anything. It was only the male reaction to the female's earning more than he did, so natural that it was almost physical. You wouldn't want him to be any other way, she thought.

The important thing was that Phil was giving her a big new job. It would be one of the biggest she had ever had. A lot of work . . .

FOR THE next hour Janice Ford staved off solicitations and salesmen and clients whose needs would keep. But when Kay's cook telephoned the office, Janice put the call through immediately. She knew her employer well enough to be sure that, if there were disaster or even confusion in her household, Kay would want to hear about it at once.

Philemon and Kay were deep in the preliminaries of the new project. He was grumbling, and not for the first time, about the fact that she had no business headquarters in New York.

"You should have an office there."

"My life is complicated enough without splitting it up between here and New York," she told him.

"Then why not move there altogether?"

"Oh, Phil — you know I can't do that. Steve wouldn't consider living there. Why should he? His roots are here. Roots are very important when a man is in politics."

"You always put him first, don't you?"

She laughed as if he had touched a nerve of happiness.

"I'd better."

The buzzer on her desk interrupted them. "Just a minute, Phil. I'm sorry." Kay picked up the telephone, listened, and her face became troubled, then gentle with sympathy.

"They know best, Ida," she said. "If they want to operate that soon, it's what should be done. . . . No, you were right to call me. Of course we can get along. I'll find someone — perhaps Martha Riley can help us out temporarily. You do just what the doctor says. You'll feel better than you have in years. You're going to St. Monica's, aren't you? Don't start worrying about the cost. Mr. Ryland and I will help. Take it easy now."

She put the telephone down. "It's my cook," she told Philemon. "You remember Ida. She has to have a major operation immediately. I was afraid of it, the way she's been feeling. Poor thing, she's scared out of her wits and maybe she should be."

Philemon grumbled, "You ought to have someone to take things like that off your shoulders."

"No one could take Ida off my shoulders," said Kay. "She's been with us more than twelve years. She practically brought up

the boys. Will you forgive me for one more minute, Phil, while I get her fixed up?"

Then for the next few minutes she was speaking to the hospital, reserving a private room for Ida, arranging about the bill. Finishing, she looked over at Peter Philemon apologetically. His glance through the cigar smoke was a personal one now, and considering her.

"Always killing yourself for somebody," he commented, "and what do you get for it?"

"I get plenty. Don't worry about me."

"You certainly look fine. You never get any older. But you're trying to do everything yourself."

"I don't think so. Davy Vail looks after most of the installations now, and he sees some customers too, though I have to be careful about that. In his way Davy's a genius, but his airs and graces can put people off. Really, I've plenty of competent people in the workrooms now and I don't want any more overhead. Besides, Phil, you have to run the show yourself if it's going to be done your way."

"Sure," he agreed, "and that's why you get big jobs. You give them all you've got."

Philemon remembered how Kay had come to see him — was it eight years ago? — the year when he had bought the Mount Royal Hotel in Radisson and added it to his chain of hostelries. She had heard the place was to be done over and she wanted to bid on the job, although at that time she had never furnished a hotel. But she had talked him into giving her the contract. I didn't make any mistake, he said to himself. I knew she had brains. I could tell she was going to go ahead like a house afire, even when she was operating on a shoestring. So was I, at the time. My luck has gone right along with hers. She doesn't have to go after business now. It drops in her lap. That's the time to look out.

They seemed a little on edge today, the two of them. That fellow takes a lot out of Kay. He doesn't fully appreciate her either. But she'd go through hell for him.

He said, "Steve must be doing pretty well. With a profession,

a salary from the state, and a wife earning your kind of money. Why don't you and he take a little trip? It would do you a lot of good."

"If my business builds up this coming year the way I hope, and I can make enough money—"

"Don't you make enough now?"

"Not too much. It sounds big, Phil, but we don't really have much leeway. Steve hates me to talk about this or seem to jump the gun on it. But you won't say anything about it, I know. Governor Elston is headed for the Senate one of these days and Steve might be in the race for governor. He'll have a fight on his hands and he'll need money to win it."

"So Steve may run for governor?" Philemon's voice weighed the idea. "Well, I guess he's right in line, as you say. And what would you do if he made it?"

"Keep smiling and shake a million hands, I suppose."

"Give up your business?"

"Oh, no, I couldn't do that."

"Wouldn't you have to? A governor's wife?"

"I don't see why. Decorating is a perfectly respectable job. Anyway I wouldn't dare give it up. Politics is too tricky. Steve might be out on his ear after a term or two, just when the boys are ready for college."

"You've got your head screwed on right, Kay."

"And another thing," she continued, "we'll need the money I make even if he is elected. The governor's salary isn't big, and a lot is expected of him. Governor Elston's wife happens to have money of her own, but I haven't any private fortune to help Steve out. Just the old earning power. As I tell Steve, that's the only dowry I brought him."

"He certainly can't kick."

"He never has. All that Steve objects to is the time my work takes. Or if I get so keyed up I can't sleep. Let's get off the subject of my private life now and stop wasting your high-priced time. What else should I know about this mountaintop job?"

"After you've gone over the blueprints, work out an estimate and we'll see where we are. Then take a run down South and

look the thing over. Maybe I can arrange to be there at the same time and we'll thrash out the details. Say, ask that girl of yours to call me a taxi and quick. I've got to check in at the airport in forty-five minutes. I'll just about make it."

She gave the instructions. "Maybe you're the one who ought to go somewhere for a rest, Phil," she said.

He shook his head. "It's no fun for a man alone. That I've tried."

"You shouldn't be alone. It's a waste, Phil."

"You have to find the right one," he said.

"You don't look for her," said Kay.

He let out a fragment of a laugh. "Who'd want me for life?"

"Almost any woman with sense. I would, if I didn't have Steve."

"So you say."

"You're defeatist, Phil. That's the trouble. You could get — "

"I guess I don't want what I could get."

She put a fond hand on his shoulder and said, "The taxi must be waiting. I always hate to have you go."

CHAPTER 4

THE OUTRAGEOUS stubbornness of the house she had inherited was the first thing that delighted Lisa Bowes when she saw it that afternoon. It had not yielded to age nor to the creeping tide of commerce. Surrounded by an elaborate wrought-iron fence, it sat neatly, and still pompously, in the middle of its grounds. Four heavy columns supported the white portico and from the upper front windows on the second floor sprang a small curving balcony. From which a queen might address a loving people or soothe an angry mob. Lisa used to play it both ways when she was a child. Later on she hated the balcony, after the night when her mother, quite drunk, had jumped from it. She hadn't been much hurt. But when Lisa approached the house after that, especially at night when some boy was bringing her home from a party, there had always been a sickening dread.

Mother always failed in her acts, thought Lisa. She was always trying to punish Father, probably because he was all through being in love with her. I understand that now.

She had sent no word that she was coming here and wondered if she would find the caretakers in the house or garage or on the property at all. But she had hardly touched the bell before the door was opened by a woman wearing a white apron. A man in a chauffeur's uniform stood awkwardly nearby. One of those lawyers must have telephoned I was coming, thought Lisa.

She said, "I'm Mrs. Bowes, Mr. Wendell's granddaughter. You must be Signe and Berne." She liked the look of the man better than that of the glassy-faced woman.

"Welcome home, Mrs. Bowes," she said, as if she had been practicing the phrase. It sounded absurd. Home.

"Thank you. I'm very glad to be here, Signe." Lisa shook hands with each of them and, as if she had been there yesterday, led them into the little cream-colored reception room on the right.

"Let's sit down," she said. "I want to tell you how very much I appreciate your staying on here and taking care of everything. And even more, I'm grateful for your looking after my grandfather so well."

"There was no one else," stated Signe Anderson. "We did all we could."

"I hope you will find everything in good shape," said Berne.

"I'm sure I shall. The house looks fine, very well kept up. Just as it used to be. I hope the blue room is still blue. That's where I always sleep."

Their dismay was obvious. "We did not know that you would want to stay here," Signe said, in a resistant way.

"Oh, yes, I think so," Lisa answered. "I may as well make use of the house."

The man was the first to accept the decision. "There's plenty of oil in the tanks," he said. "They've just been filled. We haven't used but a little. I only turned the thermostat up today when Mr. Ryland telephoned that you might be coming."

That was decent of that lawyer, thought Lisa. He's right on the job. "You've been very conscientious," she said. "I hope you will both stay on with me while I go over things and see what needs to be done. They tell me it may take some time. We'll have to adjust your wages, of course, if you take care of me. You did

the cooking for my grandfather, Signe? Can you do it for me?"

"He lived very simple and quiet," said Signe warningly. But she did not refuse.

"I'll be living very simply too," said Lisa. "I'll leave it to you to get the necessary food and supplies. I've promised my aunt, Mrs. Elston, to go to see her later this afternoon, so I shan't settle in here today. But I'll look around the house before I go."

They were dismissed with their surprises and impressions and new calculations. Lisa lit a cigarette and wished she had a drink. She went past a Chinese screen and a paneled door into the drawing room. Her mother was responsible for all this white upholstery. Not so white as it must have been twenty years ago but it would have been something to talk about then.

The room was like a beautiful ghost. She thought, I'm crazy. What am I doing here? But she knew the reason. It was because she had wanted to get back to her base, to where she took off from in the first place, to something that belonged to her. She remembered exactly when she had decided to come, the very day and hour which had been a culmination of restless indecision and humiliation.

After Jefferson Bowes' death she had stayed with Dora and Philip in Cannes. She would have left there anyway after a few weeks even if Dora had not become jealous. She had gone to Spain with the Blairs to see some bullfights and the new hotel. Then back to Paris, to the room in the Ritz where she would be in the middle of things and see all her friends.

But after a while she realized that a woman without a man had no place. She was suspected, she was in the way. It came clear that night at the Ritz, in the bar. In the midst of the noise and the high style, with the girl at the next table holding a dog dressed in the same material as she was, with the ancient and well-known prince in the corner getting stiff with drink, and with her own companions not knowing what to do with her that evening, she had suddenly had a clear vision of this old brick house, with its white columns and respectable luxury. She had felt the comfort of owning, of having something to call her own. She had wanted to go there, enter the big hall and see that

foolish fountain at the end of it. I must find out if the thing still works, Lisa thought suddenly. She went from the drawing room into the center hall that ended in a circular alcove. There a bronze boy knelt in an empty marble pool. Lisa bent, turned a spigot, and a gush of water spouted over him. She laughed aloud. It was the first time, in spite of her dazzling smile and air of gaiety, that she had really enjoyed anything since she had found Jeff dead. As, in final revenge, he had meant her to find him.

WHEN LISA told Marcia Elston later that afternoon that she planned to stay in the old Wendell house, her aunt protested at once.

"But we'd so love to have you come to us! For as long as possible."

"It's kind of you, Marcia. But I may as well stay there."

"All by yourself in that gloomy house?"

"It didn't seem gloomy. And I am used to being by myself."

"Dear child, a lovely girl like you will marry again."

"I'm thirty-five," said Lisa. "Men aren't waiting around for anyone my age."

"The right one will come. I'm sure of it. Here's the Governor. Here's my dear boy now."

Hugh Elston came into the room and welcomed Lisa with the affection his wife's only niece should feel in him, the admiration due a beautiful and rich woman, and the gravity which remembered that she had been through tragedy.

Then after a moment he said, "Very sensible to come back and look after your affairs, Lisa. It's always a good thing to give them personal attention. Though I suppose you have people you can trust. Your lawyers are Jelke, Clarke and Reid, aren't they?"

"Yes, I saw Mr. Jelke this morning. He turned me over to one of the lawyers in his office who handles estates. His name is Ryland."

"Stephen Ryland?" asked Mrs. Elston with interest. "We know him well. He's in politics, you know."

"I gathered that from what they said."

"He's a capable young fellow," said the Governor. "Honest as

the day is long. His mother was a Clifford. They had money at one time but Stephen's father was more or less of a gambler and was wiped out in '29. Stephen's had to come up the hard way but that's often an advantage. Keeps a man's feet on the ground. His wife's a smart girl, too."

"Who was she?"

"Nobody you would have known, Lisa," said her aunt. "She used to work in one of the department stores here in town."

"He told me she was an interior decorator."

"She is now. And very clever and popular. Everyone goes to her. But sometimes I'm a little sorry for Stephen. I don't think he has much home life. She's not there from morning until night. She sent those boys away to school and they seem very young to be away from their mother. Stephen told me once that his wife worked harder than he does. She can't have much time to give him. You wouldn't put up with it, Hugh."

He chuckled. "I didn't marry for brains."

CHAPTER 5

TIME was always Kay's problem toward the end of a working day. In the morning, when she planned and allotted it, there would seem to be enough time to go around, but by four o'clock in the afternoon she was always behind schedule. The desire to finish the day's work completely and have it behind her would begin to struggle with her eagerness to get home, the responsibility of having dinner on time or not interfering with the servants' evenings off. And Stephen would usually call her about that time, and ask, "When will you be through work?"

It could be exhilarating. To feel in such demand, indispensable to so many decisions, to be able to dispose of one thing after another, and know that she had done it well, often generated energy in her. But often a day left her exhausted and fatigue would feel like fright. For the work had to be done. And she must not be too tired to be a wife.

Today her schedule had been bedeviled. On top of the routine work had come the exciting new job for Peter Philemon, larger

in scope and opportunity than she had dreamed it might be. Jan's fiancé and Ida's illness had left her short-handed. Then, in the late afternoon, the unavoidable trip out to see the changes in the Barnard house.

Now, as she stepped out of the elevator, she was thinking, I must stop at Martha Riley's apartment on the way home and find out if she can take Ida's place. It's out of my way, but it's better to see her in person. If I can get her to come, the house will run smoothly and Steve won't know the difference. He needs peace at home now, with all he has to do at the end of the session. And there's that new legal job for the Wendell estate, too. He was pleased about getting that. It's a recognition by the firm. To think of that Hanford girl getting still more money! I wonder if she ever had any children. Steve says she's still good-looking. She would be; she's never had to do anything.

MARTHA RILEY closed the door of Apartment 3D and went back to the kitchen. Her husband was pouring himself another highball, and had meant to have that done before she returned, but she was very quick on her feet. So, before she had a chance to say anything about the extra drink, he opened the attack.

"What did she want? Barging in when people are getting ready to eat."

"She wants me to help her out. Her cook's going to have an operation."

"And that floors her. Can't she even boil an egg?"

"She's got a business to run."

"Crowing hens," said Tom Riley derisively, "women and their businesses."

"I don't know that you should talk."

"Well, at least you do a woman's kind of work."

She made no answer. She was thinking, planning as she put some carrots into the pressure cooker.

"You didn't take it, did you?"

"I told her I'd try."

"Not a steady job?"

"It will be pretty steady for a month or so. I told her I'd have to

have my Sundays and all day Thursdays, and I won't live in. Unless I work late some nights when she has a party. Then I may as well sleep there all night."

"I don't want my wife to be sleeping around in other people's houses after their fancy parties," he declared.

"It's easy to talk. But we can use the money. I told her forty dollars a week. She didn't want to pay that much for she has to keep Ida on pay too, but I said I couldn't come for less."

"You think more of that than you do of me," said Riley, pressing the point because he wanted to believe it himself. It was necessary to him to feel that he was a pushed-around veteran and a pushed-around husband.

"Oh, Tom, don't be so awful. You know why I want the money. We've got the car paid for now, and when we get five hundred more in the bank we can pay down enough on the cabin resort so we can take over. I'm sure it's just the thing for you. I know I could make a coffee shop go up there, and you can take the tourists fishing. They'll pay almost anything for a boat and nets and guide. I've been trying to get enough money so you could do something you'd like to do."

He said, "I'm just a drag, I guess. Better get rid of me."

"Don't take any more, Tom. You'll spoil your supper."

She tried to take the glass from him but he resisted. They faced each other violently, their quarrel close to an embrace, as it so often was.

He said, "Can't I have anything?"

"You ought to have everything. I just wish you could."

He said abruptly, "And I'd like to give you the world with a fence around it, baby."

For a second it was almost as if he had.

KAY RYLAND was nearly home, driving fast as she figured it up. Forty a week for Martha Riley, probably four weeks, a hundred and forty in the same month for Ida and a hundred for Daphne. That didn't cover the cost of the yardman and the laundress. It would amount to at least five hundred and fifty this month for service alone. For only the two of them! It was too much. It was

unnecessary. There would be the hospital bill, too. But it wasn't poor Ida's fault.

She ran the car into the garage, hardly realizing that she was there. But then, as almost always happened, the relief and the charm of being home, of having the evening and night ahead with Steve, came over her like a delicious ache that didn't hurt. His car was not in yet and she was glad to be home before he was. He had said he might be a little late. It wouldn't be too bad if they didn't sit down until seven thirty tonight. Ida wouldn't mind. She'd be so relieved to find that Martha was coming and that the kitchen would be in competent hands.

There was a small pile of letters on a silver tray in the hall. She picked them up and saw with a lift of love that there was one from Mark. She was opening it as she went through to the kitchen, where Ida was beating up some froth of dessert, and Daphne, in her wine-colored uniform, was studying advertisements of clothes in the evening paper.

"How are you feeling, Ida?"

"I don't feel bad at all right now. I wish I could believe the doctors were wrong. Maybe they are."

"They're not," said Kay, "and I'm so glad that they aren't delaying. You'll be fit as a fiddle before you know it."

"It's awful hard on you, Mrs. Ryland, with all you have to do."

"That's all right. Martha Riley is coming to help. Mr. Ryland isn't home yet, I see. We'll have to hold up dinner."

"Okay, Mrs. Ryland," said Ida, casting a glance at Daphne. The younger girl looked sullen, which meant of course that she wanted to go out tonight and resented the delay. Is she empty-headed or just hard, wondered Kay. If I had been given the chance to live in a home like this when I was working my way — but she did not want to struggle with the problem of Daphne tonight. The day had been complicated enough. She wanted to read Mark's letter.

It read:

This will be very short because there is a lot to do around here. I am going out for Track but probably will not do well as my wind

is not so very good yet. Colin made the second basketball team in his form and is very conceited. We had a poet speak in chapel but he was pretty hard to understand. One of my friends had a Chicago paper. It had Dad's picture in it about some politics. I am saving my allowance to buy a camera but there is not much because Colin borrowed some. We have no colds or anything. Much love from Mark.

He writes very well; it's really an informative letter, thought Kay, and went to her desk to write *camera Mark birthday* on a piece of paper which she pushed into the pocket of her suit coat. She shuffled through the other letters, opened an invitation, laid it down without interest, and looked with curiosity at an envelope with the return address of the Madison Academy in the corner. It was addressed to Steve but it concerned the boys, of course. She had no qualm about opening it. But the enclosure made her stiffen.

Steve hadn't paid the boys' tuition. This was a second bill, a reminder, a dun. Four hundred and thirty dollars and it should have been paid in early February. Steve had said he would pay it. He mustn't let that account run. It was an obligation for his sons and he'd promised to take care of it.

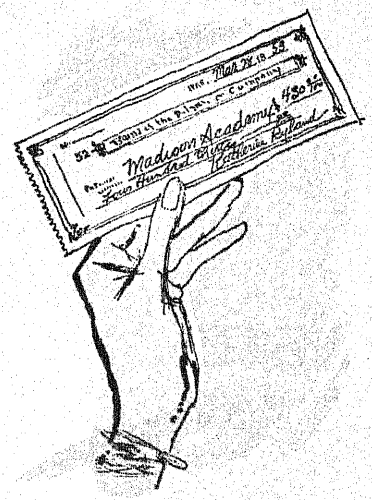
She spread it on the desk where he would see it. Then she remembered that he had said he was going to borrow from the bank today to cover those taxes. What happened to Steve's money? They made a budget and half the time he ignored it. It was his political obligations that made him spend money he didn't budget, and he was always the one who picked up the check when someone else could better afford it. As for the house, he only paid for the fuel, light and water. Of course, there was also his life insurance. He was carrying too much. But when she tried to argue with him about that, he'd say it was the only estate he could provide as things were.

In quick decision Kay took a checkbook from the drawer.

"Daphne," she said, a few minutes later, "will you please take this letter and drop it in the mailbox on the corner?"

Now that it was done Kay knew that she had been impetuous, overhasty, driven by impulse. There seemed something shaming

about the overdue bill for her sons' board and schooling. She had to get rid of it. She had written the check and sent it off, but her satisfaction was uncertain.



She thought, I'll have to tell him that I paid it. But not tonight. It might spoil the whole evening. Maybe I should have waited, spoken to him about it first. He won't like my paying it, but he'll be glad it's paid.

It was almost seven o'clock. In her room Kay changed her clothes and tried to discard problems with the rest of the things she had worn all day. But she wondered why the business about the Wendell estate was delaying Stephen so long.

She mixed a cocktail, though that was his usual task. The ice was melting away in the shaker when he finally arrived.

"Hello," said Kay, "you're pretty late, darling. Anything wrong?"

"Not a thing. I thought you'd probably be late getting home tonight yourself. With that big job you and Phil were tackling when I left you."

"Phil took the afternoon plane for Chicago. Ready for a drink?"

"I've had a couple so don't wait for me. I'll clean up and be down in five minutes. You go ahead."

She was surprised, for Stephen rarely drank on his way home. He liked a drink in his own house, with her. Kay poured herself a cocktail but it was flat and watery, and when Steve returned she told him they shouldn't keep dinner or Ida waiting much longer.

She explained, "Ida went to the clinic today and they are putting her into the hospital tomorrow for a major operation. They don't want to delay it at all."

"Why, the poor old girl," said Stephen. "I'm very sorry. Anything I can do?"

"I don't think so. Not right now. I fixed her up with a private room because she always likes to keep to herself. I knew she'd hate being in a ward."

"Oh, sure. She ought to have a room. It's the least we can do. She's been very loyal to us. I'll be glad to take care of it," said Stephen.

Kay did not argue it. He meant what he said. He would be glad to take care of Ida. His way of doing it would be to give her all possible comforts, and to catch up with the bills when he could.

She thought it was better to change the subject. "Where were you carousing so late?"

"I worked until half past six, going over the inventory of the Wendell estate. The lady asked for action. Then Ralph Lamson — he was working late too — and I stopped at the club for a few minutes. He was giving me some dope on Lisa Bowes and her situation. He knows a good deal about it."

"What does Ralph think about her?"

"He seems to think she's quite a girl. He knew her when she was much younger and lived here now and then. Evidently there was a good deal of trouble between her parents and they would park her here sometimes with the old man. And Ralph had heard quite a lot about this last marriage with Bowes."

"How many times has she been married?"

"Only twice. There was that juvenile business. She wasn't very happy at home and was crazy about horses and married this steeplechase rider. He broke his neck in a race not long after that. Then she didn't marry for some years. Ralph said she played hard to get for a long time."

"Maybe she was grieving over the jockey."

"Could have been. But the poor girl didn't do much better the second time. Jefferson Bowes was supposed to be a brilliant fellow — going up in the State Department and all that. But Ralph tells me he was a bad bargain — drank heavily, played around. She was the one who held things together as long as it lasted. He says it's generally known that she had a very bad time."

Kay put down her drink and they went to the table. During dinner she told him more about the new hotel resort Peter Philemon had bought, and spoke of the breaks Phil had given her.

"Phil gets his money's worth out of any breaks he gives you," said Stephen.

"I'd hate it if he didn't. But he goes out of his way to give me business. He could just as well have hired a New York or Chicago decorator."

Stephen was silent for a moment, then looked across at her. "You know, I nearly called you up this afternoon after I got to the capitol. But people kept interrupting."

"What were you going to call me about?"

"Nothing important. I just got the idea that you felt I didn't appreciate all that money you took in last year. I do, of course. I think you're a wonderful businesswoman."

Kay smiled at him and said, "Thanks, darling," because it was indicated. But it still didn't feel like a compliment. Businesswoman — the two words somehow nullified each other. Though that was unfair. They had to be joined. Conditions in the world demanded it. But Stephen didn't like businesswomen and never had. He shied away from the fact that she was one. He loved her in spite of it.

Forget how smart you are now and be my girl — that was what he would often say. Sometimes it seemed as if he deliberately ignored the necessity behind all her working years, from the very beginning of their life together. And it was still necessary.

For he likes all this, thought Kay, seeing the deep coral of the Bristol finger bowls, the stretch of fine linen, the crystal pheasants glimmering on a table that was a century old. He likes the harmony of shapes and textures in this house, the comfort and luxury and pleasure to the senses accumulated here. And we could not have it unless I were a businesswoman.

IDA WAS stacking plates in the dishwater. Daphne, in the red woolly coat Kay had given her last Christmas, was about to leave to keep her date and the excitement of it was shining in her eyes. Daphne was very pretty. That was her trouble. Her prettiness

came first in her own reckoning of life. Judge Amsley Hunt had seen that when she had come before him in his court. He found her innocent of anything but bad company and set himself to do something about that. He had asked Kay if she could find a job for her. There was no vacancy in Kay's business so she had taken the girl into her own home to help Ida and to learn the skills of housekeeping. But Daphne learned only what she must.

"Are you through with your work, Daphne?" Kay asked, and the girl paused with her hand on the door.

"I said I'd finish by myself, Mrs. Ryland," said Ida. "She'll have extra to do tomorrow."

"We can manage, can't we, Daphne, when Ida isn't here?"

Daphne said, with her limp, resistant helplessness, "I don't know anything about cooking."

"This will be the best chance in the world for you to learn a little," answered Kay, "and if you're really interested in that nice young man, it's a very good idea."

"He don't care if I can't cook," said Daphne.

"Men feel differently when they're married," Kay warned, but she knew she was not making any impression and told Daphne to go on her way.

She helped Ida set the kitchen in order for the night, lingering to provide a little companionship.

"Ida, you're going to be a new woman when this is all over. And, by the way, I'm going to take you to the hospital tomorrow."

Ida shook her head wordlessly, as if she were about to burst into tears. But the swinging door opened and Stephen came in to speak to her. He was smoking his pipe and there was no air of apprehension or worry about him. The atmosphere of the room changed as he told Ida that he didn't want her making up to any of those handsome doctors, that she mustn't let one of the sawbones get her away from him. Ida began to giggle.

I couldn't cheer her up like that, thought Kay, watching. It takes a man to do it for a woman — it takes Steve anyway. She gave him an amused and grateful glance and left him joking about what went on in hospitals. In the study she put another chunk of birchwood on the fire, and watched the flames peel

off the bark. As soon as she put her head back against the white chair, the lashes slipped down over her eyes. It was good to finish the day.

"This upset in the crew is going to be hard on you," Stephen said, finding her there a few minutes later. But as she opened her eyes to watch him, she was sure he wasn't considering the domestic problem. He looked too much interested in his reflections. Politics? How to handle the Bowes woman? People like that always got special handling because they expected it.

"It will work out all right," she answered. "Martha Riley will hold the fort. She won't come except on what is practically an hourly basis, though—Martha's tough about money. I suppose she supports that man she married."

Her remark put Stephen off. There was a faint echo of personal relevance in it. It sounded disillusioned, not like Kay. He had been increasingly conscious all evening of how lovely she was looking. But she had been half asleep when he came in just now. She's all tired out, he told himself. It used to be easy to make love to Kay when we had time together like this. Why does she wear herself out so that I don't dare touch her for fear of being one more burden?

Kay was thinking, a wonderful businesswoman—is that all he sees in me now? Don't I seem attractive, as I used to be?

Their desires passed each other, with no signal.

"Why don't you go to bed, Kay? I'm going to catch up on some of these magazines."

"I will pretty soon."

"And cut out the worrying."

"I'm not worrying. I'm certainly relieved to have those taxes paid and out of the way. Only I wish you hadn't borrowed any money, if you did."

"That's all right. It's just a short-term loan. I'm going to have this extra Wendell business now, and with the money for that in sight I'm all set. Things have piled up lately—the insurance and the school fees for the kids on top of the rest."

"You don't have to worry about those."

"I don't worry, but it's something that has to be taken care of."

"It has been," said Kay. "I paid it. I wasn't going to mention it tonight, but maybe you'll sleep better with that off your mind."

He had been talking casually as he chose among the magazines on the table. But now he turned, confronting her.

"What do you mean, you paid it?"

His tone was so incredulous that Kay answered almost in apology, "I wrote a check for the school. The bill was here when I came home this afternoon. A second bill. It was a dun. I knew you were pressed for cash — "

"Oblige me by tearing up the check," he said, and that was an order.

"I can't. It's already mailed. I sent Daphne to the corner with it before you came home."

"Well, that's just fine. I mailed them a check yesterday."

"You didn't!"

"What makes you say that? That was the understanding, wasn't it?"

"I know — that was what bothered me."

"Bothered you! Didn't you think I'd do what I said I would? Couldn't you mind your own business?"

"It *is* my business. It was the second bill — "

"What if it was the second? Or the ninth? But of course you couldn't stand it. You had to show who wears the pants in this family."

"Don't use that horrid expression! I hate it!"

"It may be horrid but it's a pretty fair description of what you try to do!"

She rarely had seen him so angered. She had been stupid and gone off half cocked. But it seemed as if it wasn't just this, as if there were more rankling in his mind.

"I'm very sorry, Steve."

"Somewhat after the fact."

"It was impulsive and silly, but you know how I hate being in debt. And this particular bill was a school bill — it brought back that awful time when I couldn't pay my tuition at the University. I've never forgotten how it felt to drop out."

"Don't be so sentimental. My credit is perfectly good at Madison.

They know me. Anyway, the tuition was paid. You might have accorded me the courtesy of finding out whether it was or not."

"But you weren't home. You were so late."

"So I was. I was unruly enough to be half an hour behind schedule," he said with sarcasm. "I have work to do."

"Work? Sitting around the club and gossiping about Lisa Bowes?"

"That too is strictly my own business."

"But it's my business to keep things going around here—"

"I'm not going to put up with much more of this," he said, and closed a door between them.

A QUARREL between a man and wife is a waking thing in a house. Ruthlessly it may arouse a child, who listens with apprehension to the sound of a voice it has never known to be so harsh, or to the incredible noise of adult weeping. Even where there is no one to hear, and the quarrel itself is soundless, it is still wakeful, pervading the house like an evil genius.

The husband may sleep, perhaps even the wife. But though lamps are out, the quarrel is still at work, adding up justifications, pleading its case all over again, whetting the gnawing desire to be in the right.

Why does he think I keep on working, Kay thought. Doesn't he know I'd rather be home, taking it easy, doing the things I like to do around the house? I never had a minute to plant those crocuses. . . .

It was a reflex when I saw that bill, a throwback. I could see the mean face of that Dean who told me that I couldn't get my degree. That woman I had been working for had called up and done her best to blacken my reputation, and the Dean didn't like me anyway. Steve never realized what I was up against. He was poor in a different way, with friends of his family around, people he could turn to. He didn't know what it was like to have nobody except an aunt who didn't want you, and then a judge and the people you were farmed out to. To have your parents gone so completely, to carry the horror around in your heart, and to feel it grow as you began to understand it.

But of course you shouldn't have paid that bill. It seemed to Steve like an insult. . . . Try to get some sleep now; you didn't have enough last night either. You can't afford a breakdown, my girl. It isn't fair to your work, especially with that big new job ahead. . . . Is Steve asleep? Oh, I can't stand this —

"Are you asleep, Steve?" she whispered.

"More or less. Are you all right?"

"Steve — I just want to say that I'll send a note to the treasurer at Madison and say it was a mistake — "

"Oh, forget it. They'll send your check back. Better get some sleep now. You need it."

"I'm going to."

He found that he was listening. There was nothing to hear. He kept listening. She hadn't even turned over. He was too restless to fall asleep. Was she lying there brooding?

"Are you asleep, Kay?" He came and sat on the side of her bed.

"Not yet."

"Kay, I'm sorry I jumped on you."

"I was just a poor fool — trying to help."

"Sure you were — don't cry — "

"And I wanted to have such a lovely, peaceful evening — "

"So did I. That's what I hoped for when I came home."

"You'll catch cold, sitting here, Steve. You'll freeze."

"Can't you do something about that?"

"Oh, Steve — I do love you so."

CHAPTER 6

Judge Amsley Hunt was a tall, worn, aging jurist. The wear had come from being directly in the path of crimes, sins and failures for more than thirty years. But he still had deep reserves of kindliness, in spite of having used a great deal. These he kept for the helpless, for faulty children who had never been taught any better, for girls who were not very much to blame for the predicaments they got into.

Sometimes he took a hand or lent his weight in the political world. Every politician in the state respected Judge Hunt's in-

fluence; he was re-elected every six years without much more effort than it took to file for office. That was no accident and the party leaders knew it. They said that he never forgot a name or a face. It was also true that he never ceased to be interested in a human situation that had commanded his attention.

When on a lovely June day he took Kay's hand and asked how she was, she knew that he was not greeting the well-placed woman so much as the girl who once had been a ward of his court. The fortunes of that girl would always be of concern to him.

"And how is your husband, Katherine? And the boys?"

"Steve is fine. The boys are away now, at Madison Academy."

"Good. And you manage to keep busy, don't you?"

"Too busy. That's why I haven't come to see you lately. I've been intending to for the last three months. But in April I had to go South on business, and my cook, the one I've had so long, has been sick. She's just recovered from a serious operation, so I'm still getting things at home straightened around."

"How is the little girl I sent to you? Daphne Lamb?"

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I don't seem to make any headway with her, Judge Hunt."

"How do you mean? Is she showing any signs of delinquency?"

"No, I don't think she's that type of girl."

"I was quite sure she wasn't wanton. She was in bad company, and that was why I appealed to you. Tell me why you are so discouraged about her."

Kay said, "Well — she doesn't want to learn anything. Daphne does what she has to do and nothing more. Of course, some girls simply don't like housework, and I told her that if she wanted to try something else, perhaps beauty-parlor training or work in a department store, I'd talk to you about it and see what could be arranged. But she wasn't interested. I can't strike a spark of ambition in her or arouse any interest in making herself more competent and able to earn her living."

"What does interest her?"

"Her looks mostly. Clothes. And dates with a young man called Flick Monohan. He seems a very decent young fellow, and you had told me not to treat her as if she were on parole."

"Much better not. This young man — does he want to marry her? Could he support her?"

"He'd have to. She wouldn't lift a hand. He works in a little snack shop and wants to buy an interest in it. He seems very straightforward and honest. I like him."

"Marriage would be the best thing in the world for Daphne, if you think he's good enough."

"He's too good for her! I almost feel I should warn Flick."

"Warn him of what?"

"That Daphne's an idle girl, a genuine parasite. That she won't bring him anything if she does marry him. I said to her one day, 'What do you think a girl should contribute when she gets married?' And she looked at me blankly and said, 'The man has to do the contributing!' "

The Judge threw back his head and roared with laughter. "Not so unusual a point of view," he said, subsiding into chuckles.

"It is nowadays," insisted Kay, "when more than half the girls in Daphne's income bracket keep on earning after marriage. And expect to. What else can they do? They need the money."

"As much as their children need homes?"

"The homes depend on the jobs."

"Should a woman ever let that be true?"

"Very often she can't help herself."

"The concept is wrong nonetheless," said the Judge thoughtfully. "I hear that argument almost every day. Some woman in tears because her child has been picked up by the police tells me that she's working to take care of a child who's running the streets. Often she's working to equip her home with nonessentials, when the necessary thing for the child is her presence. If she works for subsistence and shelter, that's one thing. But too many women are forgetting what their main job is."

Kay said, almost pleadingly, "Most of them don't forget. I know. I've been through it. You can't imagine how we want to get home at night."

"I suppose so," the Judge agreed in a gentler voice. "It's a predicament. But unless women reorient themselves, the family may well disappear."



"What any normal woman wants most is to be a wife and a mother," Kay said, "but today she usually has to do other things too."

"She always did."

"Not so much in the past."

"I'm not sure that's true. Working for hire was less general perhaps. But the valiant woman always had a great range of duties and interests — and earning wasn't excluded. Even in the scriptures. Have you ever read Proverbs? The chapter in which the jobs of the well-rounded woman of antiquity are set forth?"

Kay shook her head and the Judge began to quote sonorously. *"She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar. She hath considered a field, and bought it: with the fruit of her hands she hath planted a vineyard. She made fine linen —"* he stopped to smile at Kay and the inference *" — and sold it,* or as one version has it, *she delivered a girdle to the Chanaanite,* which would seem to imply that she was a businesswoman. But not to the exclusion of other duties. Listen: *She hath put out her*

hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle. She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor. She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow: for all her domestics are clothed with double garments. She hath opened her mouth to wisdom and the law of clemency is on her tongue; she hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle."

"What beautiful words!" exclaimed Kay, drinking them in.

"Are they not? I'm quoting only parts of the chapter. But you see that even in that age the woman who was considered virtuous and valiant seems to have been businesswoman, student, housewife, mate and mother. This multiplicity of tasks for women is nothing new. A woman's stature always increased with the diversity of her responsibilities, if she discharged them well. As the verses go on: *Her children rose up and called her blessed; her husband, and he praised her.* Just as, I am sure, your husband praises the variety of your achievements."

He saw the ripple of trouble cross her sensitive face, and thought, she's a beautiful, intelligent woman. Powerful, too. Her husband is also going to be powerful. They'll have to make room for each other in their lives. She's disturbed — and not only about that little girl.

She sat silent for half a minute, and the Judge was conscious that she was covering up thoughts. "I'm taking too much of your time," she said at last. "All I wanted was to tell you about Daphne. I'll try harder with her."

"You've been wonderfully kind, Katherine. Don't run away for a minute. I want to hear about yourself. You're still active in business?"

"Very much so. And don't think that I neglect my family!"

"You never would. But you told me a long time ago that you expected to stop work. Hasn't that time come yet? You've worked very hard, Katherine, for a great many years. And now you have that fine house — "

"Which has to be kept up. With its nonessentials! But seriously, Steve and I have a great many obligations. We'll get on top of them one of these days."

"He's very well spoken of all over the state since he's become Speaker. I suppose you intend to do your part to make him our next governor?"

"That's pretty remote."

"Not so remote, with Senator Ferebee retiring."

"Do you think there's any chance of that?"

The Judge looked at her in surprise and saw that she didn't know. He said, "Ask your husband about that. Also give him my regards and good wishes. From all I hear he's the kind of young man who could sweep the cobwebs out of this state."

"I'll tell him that. He'll be so pleased."

She stood up, knowing that he was not quite through yet, wishing that he would make no reference to the past, and yet, beyond the wish, she wanted him to speak of it. He was the only person except herself who knew the girl she had been.

The Judge asked, "Do you ever hear from your people in Philadelphia?"

"No. I never shall. My grandfather died some years ago. There are only a few cousins left now and I never met any of them. I suppose they regarded my mother as having cut herself off from the family. They might recall vaguely that a cousin who had married someone quite outside their group was burned to death in a forest fire. But it wouldn't mean anything to them."

"I recall that such correspondence as I had with your relatives was quite unsatisfactory."

"They didn't want to have anything to do with me," said Kay, "and there was no reason why they should. What I resented was what my aunt told me about the Corby family's attitude toward my mother. They seemed to feel she had disgraced herself by marrying my father because he came from a family that worked in the mines instead of in offices. You'd think they would have been proud of her imagination and bravery, breaking away from a pretty easy life and coming out to a country as rough as it was then."

"She was doing some sort of social work, wasn't she?"

"Yes, that was what she went into after she left college. She was working with an organization that was studying conditions

in mining villages and they sent her up North, where she met my father and married him. He was working in the mines — in a place called Ironhill — but he didn't like that kind of work. My mother had a little money and they bought a big acreage for a farm and sheep ranch. After he was killed in the war she lived there by herself, more or less — I was very young — and that was how it happened."

"Too bad."

Kay wanted to talk about it now. Once she had opened up the story, she had to go on with it.

"They must have had wonderful plans, and if they had lived they would have done what they wanted to do. It's been done by other people since, in that region — raising sheep, starting a mink ranch — those were their ideas more than thirty years ago. But the forest fire left nothing of their place except burned stumps. And me."

"Poor child."

"Did I ever tell you that the last people who saw my mother alive said that she appeared in the clearing carrying white buttoned shoes full of letters? They were my father's letters, of course, and she wanted to save them, even when everything else was burning up. But all she managed to save was me, putting me in that truck that was going to come back for her and couldn't get through the fire again."

"It was the devil's own night," said the Judge. "We didn't know for days after how many people died. Even here, seventy miles away, we were blinded by smoke. Do you ever hear from your aunt now, your father's sister?"

"She washed her hands of me when I ran away from that fishing resort she was running."

"You weren't much to blame for that."

"But I wonder what would have happened to me if I hadn't been brought into your court. I'll always be grateful. Let me take care of all the Daphnes you want to send me."

"I wish I could have sent you to yourself as you are now. I didn't seem able to find such a home for you. You were shifted around too much."

"That made me independent anyway. I learned to take care of myself. Most of the families I lived with were good to me, but after I settled into one of them their circumstances would change. They left the city, or their grandmothers came to live with them and there was no extra room."

"Always the problem."

"The people and the rooms blur a little now. The only one I never will forget is that dreadful woman I was working for during my last year at the University. She wasn't one of your people. I was of age by that time, and I had been sent to her by the self-help bureau. She went on benders and would take her hang-overs out on me. I stood it as long as I could and then I tried to leave the house. When I asked her for three months' back pay, she accused me of all sorts of things. She lied to the Dean about me. And she didn't pay me. I couldn't pay my tuition for the last term, so I didn't graduate. It still rankles."

"Why didn't you come to me?"

Kay thought back. She said, "I think I was afraid you might believe what that woman said was true. That I stole her liquor and flirted with her husband. The Dean believed it. I didn't want you to be disappointed in me. It was a hideous few months. But it worked out. I don't take a college degree so seriously now."

"You've done very well without one."

"Pretty well."

"And you like your work?"

"Oh, I love it, Judge Hunt. That's one reason I'd hate to stop completely. You never tire of working with beauty. But Steve wants me to slow down, and I'm going to, as soon as we can afford it. We should have more time together."

"As his career develops it may need a great deal of your time as well as his own."

"I hope it will. I know what you mean. I'm so glad you think well of Steve."

"I think well of his wife, too," said the Judge. "Come to see me more often, Katherine. Don't let these intervals be so long."

"I won't. This talk has done me so much good. I'll come soon again."

CHAPTER 7

THAT WAS Kay's intention. She intended also to look up the chapter in Proverbs. But she never found time to do it, and the words dimmed in her mind as the days went by. Now it was late August. Next week the boys must go back to school. They had come home in June, full of delight at being back in familiar places, but within a week their energies were bursting the seams of the days, and it was hard to find occupation for them. Kay arranged for tennis lessons, picnics, occasional movies, and felt a worry lifted when the time came for them to spend three weeks in a boys' camp.

Stephen said, "Good Lord, it's the only place for those killers!" But Kay had an empty feeling again when she came home at night and saw the boys' rooms, orderly to the point of desolateness.

While the boys were at camp she had flown to Carolina to see how the work of remodeling the hotel was going on. The opening was planned for the late autumn, when the local hunt would be meeting every week. The owners of nearby estates would be in residence, and they, as well as transients and travelers, were counted on to welcome the new hotel.

The Ryland shop and workroom had been busy all summer. Janice Clark—who had been Janice Ford—had not taken a vacation. "Let me save it for later," she always said, when Kay suggested a holiday.

The fear was that Janice might not be able to save it for happiness. She was pregnant, and her figure was beginning to change. There was a white haggardness under her eyes and she was even more careless now about what she wore. She had not paid much attention to that since word had come that Joe was in a prison camp in Korea. Kay's heart ached for her.

KAY HAD many demands on her time. A local hostess of importance always gave a large evening party after the opening of the City Symphony Orchestra, and it had been suggested to her that she undertake it this year. She had promised to do so. As

she told Stephen, laughing at herself frankly, she had been flattered into it. Not so long ago it would have been unimaginable for someone to say to her, "Everyone hopes you will give the Symphony reception. Your house is so charming and you entertain so easily."

It would be pleasant to give the party, and she was glad to have the house used, for next year there might be the problem of what to do with it.

On the night after she had visited Judge Hunt she had said to Steve, "Have you heard that Senator Ferebee is going to retire?"

"Oh, yes. That's definite."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I probably didn't think of it."

"But that affects you! Judge Hunt said to me today that you may be the next governor."

"Judge Hunt said that? Where did you run into him?"

"I went to talk to him about Daphne."

"How did the governor business happen to come up?"

"He brought it up. Deliberately, I think. He was very flattering about you," and Kay repeated the rest of the Judge's comment and his message.

"He's a great guy," said Stephen. "He's a wise old bird, too."

"But why have you been keeping this to yourself?"

"Oh, darling," he said, "I don't want you to begin to count any chickens before they're hatched. The Governor is still playing his cards very close to his chest."

Kay did not count chickens. But she began to look in the political-gossip columns for Stephen's name, and there it often was. He was very active all summer. There were political rallies and grass-roots conferences at various places in the state and he attended as many as he could. He was kept busy in the Jelke, Clarke and Reid office when he was in the city, for Mr. Reid was still unable to come back to work.

The settlement of the Wendell estate moved along slowly. Kay thought, after she passed the Wendell house one August afternoon and saw Stephen's car parked in the porte-cochere, that it couldn't be settled too soon to suit herself.

Naturally, Steve had a great deal of business with Lisa Bowes. But why not attend to it in his office? Why do business at nearly six o'clock on an August afternoon? His car was the only one in sight. There was no party obviously. Kay told herself, he probably stopped in to bring her a paper to sign. She expects to be waited on like that. Or maybe he went to see her just because he wanted to. And what if he did? He enjoys her company and conversation. I'm glad of it. I'm not one of those dreadful women who expects to keep her husband on a leash. Of course he likes her. I like Lisa too.

She had told Stephen that she did, after Lisa had dined with them the first time. Kay said, being with Lisa is like taking a trip and meeting fascinating people. There had been deftness in the conversation, an amused way of not letting differences of opinion stiffen into debates, of treating grave and crucial happenings in the world with personal familiarity. Lisa knew many of the people involved in them. She had dined at a palace in Rome last year just before the elections, she knew the prominent political figures, the behind-the-scenes gossip.

Kay would have felt ungrateful if she had not liked Lisa when her inheritance was doing Stephen such a good turn. He had never been in better form, a good companion to the boys if he happened to be home when they were, and never more considerate of Kay. It had been a good summer. Hadn't it?

But what was he doing at the Wendell house today? Did he make a habit of going there late in the afternoon? Kay thought, how would I know?

ALL DURING the day Stephen had wanted to go. He had seen Lisa the day before in his office and when she left she had said, "Drop in tomorrow on your way home and I'll give you a drink. Just if you feel like it. Don't bother to telephone."

At ten this morning he had decided against it. It would be better to keep their relationship on a business basis. Of course there would be social occasions when he would be bound to see Lisa. But he was firm with himself, decisive, reasonable, thinking, she's interesting and charming, she knows her way about, of

course, but don't get involved. You have a family. Don't get ideas.

At two o'clock in the afternoon he began to wonder what she would think if he didn't come. Would she be expecting him? She had been quite casual but already he knew that with Lisa to be casual was not to be forgetful or careless. She was lonesome, poor girl, living in that big ark. She ought to get out of it, live where she'd be in the middle of her friends, or people like herself.

There was one thing he should talk to her about, and soon. That offer for her house from the Good Food Chain Stores shouldn't be left hanging in mid-air. She wouldn't get a better one. At four o'clock he thought it was a duty to see her.

Before six he was there. And once with her he did not feel in the least worried or furtive. On the contrary. Being with Lisa somehow made him feel more of a person. He was conscious of greater scope as a man, of capacities that could be realized, of usefulness to a woman.

What they talked about was Lisa. She told him more about herself than she ever had before. He was sitting in the end of a deep sofa in the library and she was beside him in an armless chair covered with old needle point. It had short rockers and sometimes moved as she did, bringing her a little closer, swinging her away.

It was his proposition about the sale of the house that brought on the talk about herself.

Stephen advised, "It's as good an offer as you may get. In fact, probably the best. The price is based on the value of the land. They'd tear down the house, of course."

"I don't like the thought of that," she said. "This is the nearest to a home that I've ever known."

"Is that true?"

"My mother and father never did much about a home," she told him. "He fell out of love with her almost immediately after they were married, I think, so they never had any use for one. When they lived together or were trying to make up, they rented places or lived in hotels. But sometimes one or both of my parents wouldn't want me around, and I would be sent here. This house was always the same, and that I loved. There was the same idiot

boy in the fountain in the hall, the balcony where you could be Juliet or Marie Antoinette, my own blue room."

"Now I understand why you have a feeling about the place," said Stephen, "but you won't want to go on living here once the estate is settled. It's too lonely. You really ought to consider this offer. They mean business and they want an answer right away."

"Then tell them no."

"It's not good sense, Lisa."

She said, "Let me stay, Steve."

"Good Lord, it's yours!" he exclaimed. "What you say goes."

"I don't feel so *de trop* here as I do in most places."

"You *de trop!* Why, you're the best thing that's happened around here in a long time. What are you talking about? You're a beautiful girl — you can do anything, go anywhere — "

"Maybe. But I've had pretty bad luck."

"That will change."

"It's been a long time changing. Once I thought I knew what I wanted. I wanted to live in a country house, with horses and dogs and moors — I'd been down in the hunting country in Carolina and reading English novels. I wanted to marry a fearless, dashing man who would swing off his horse every night and kiss me — so I got me a man who looked well on a horse."

"You were a crazy kid."

"I was eighteen when I ran off with Harry Martin. Poor Harry — he just wanted to go around from steeplechase to steeplechase. In my early married life we were always getting horses in and out of vans. I knew before long that my charm was that I could pay for the vans and the horses. It ended before too long on a wet course."

She was silent. He was not embarrassed by her confidences, but he wondered if she would go on. She did.

"So then, after a while — it was quite a long while — there was Jeff. That was 1943. Harry had been dead five years and I was twenty-five. I met Jeff in Washington — he was in Government service — and when we were married he managed to take me with him to England. After the liberation, when things started up again, we went to Paris."



"What happened to him?" asked Stephen. He wanted to know.

"He destroyed himself, by degrees. Before he did the last thing. There wasn't much left to destroy, then."

After a minute he said quietly, "You can marry again. You can take your time and choose a better man."

"Choose," she repeated. "It's good advice — if they let you. But a woman without a man seems to be without a reason — "

"You're a very feminine woman."

"Isn't that saying it twice?"

"No — I mean that some women don't need a man."

"Now you're incredible."

"At least that's what they think."

"There's a vainglorious grin on your face. But they are poor fools," said Lisa, and laughed, lifting her glass so that he could fill it again.

WHEN STEPHEN asked Kay later that evening what she was thinking about, she said, about politics and what it involves, being at the mercy of people.

Then she asked, "Do you mind if I say one thing, Steve?"

"Aren't you going to say it anyhow?"

"Yes, I guess so. It's only this. It seems to me that it isn't very smart, or good politics, to go calling on Lisa Bowes all by yourself, and leave your car parked in her driveway. It was your car there this afternoon, wasn't it?"

He was startled and yet suddenly relieved that Kay had seen it. Now everything was in the clear.

"I have business with Lisa, Kay. I went to talk to her about selling her house."

"Well, I don't see why you can't see her in your office. You are in politics. You aren't quite so free as men who aren't in public life. Suppose some busybody sees your car there, maybe more than once, tries to make something of it — "

"Supposing all that," he said impatiently, as she paused.

"It's only a question of whether a man who may run for the highest office in the state next year should let himself in for gossip that could harm his chances of election."

"That's the old blackmail. I'm inclined to believe it's obsolete, Kay."

"I'm not trying to blackmail you!"

"I didn't say you were. I was speaking of a method of exciting fear, of demanding conformity of the man who seeks public office. He must have no preferences that aren't shared by the majority. He mustn't have any extravagances. He's advised to have a medium-priced car. He used to have to wear a nightshirt to be a sound candidate. He and his wife had to stay together no matter how she might hate him or what he might do on the sly."

"But," said Kay, "I didn't mean—"

He wouldn't let her talk yet. He had taken the floor, quite literally, and was pacing it as he spoke. "I say that men who go into public life shouldn't be hypocrites. That's what ought to disqualify them. Take a governor's job. He has to understand the problems of people as well as the correctives. He can't set himself apart. He has to be sympathetic to the modern world and what it wants—faster cars and safer highways, bigger universities, more chances for more people, and less dogmatism about who's a fool and who's a failure. Or a sinner. No one ought to offer himself as the possible head of a great unit of government if he's either ashamed of himself or afraid of the public he asks to vote for him. He can't be a hypocrite and do a job."

Kay said, "You would never be a hypocrite. It's not in you. But I guess I am."

"Nonsense—no one was ever less one than you, Kay!"

"Yes, I'm one. I wasn't actually worried about what might happen to your career if you went to see Lisa. I suppose I really was trying a form of blackmail for I believe everything you've just said. But I simply couldn't bear the thought of your being alone with her!"

"Let's not talk any more about that right now."

"Not now. I don't want to." She gave a little laugh. "But I don't want anyone to give you that look you had when you came home tonight, of having left a good time for a duty."

He felt himself stiffen. How keen she was.

"I say to myself that you must be free, that I must be more

detached about you, that men have a right to admire more than one woman. I tell myself this," said Kay, "but it doesn't do any good. The way I feel doesn't get less as I grow older. If anything, it gets worse. Why do we never talk about Cynthia any more?"

"Cynthia who? Oh, I know what you mean."

"It took you a minute."

"Those jokes play out," he said awkwardly but gently.

"I suppose so. But it was such a lovely, exciting joke. Not always so funny either. I'm in a silly mood. Pay no attention to me."

"You're tired," said Stephen, automatically. "You're carrying too big a load, between Philemon's projects and the bother I am to you. I wish you'd always believe this, Kay, that one of the things that concerns me deeply is how to make living easier for you."

"I love our life as it is."

He didn't join in the declaration.

CHAPTER 8

DAVY VAIL had resisted Kay's invitation to the party at her house after the Symphony concert, but he was there. The chance to spend an hour in the company of the great cellist, Verber, and Rachel Selim, one of the top-ranking pianists of the world, had been the reason he gave himself for coming. But also his intellectual contempt for the most respected and powerful social group in this provincial city could not overcome a curious satisfaction in having been asked to join it for an evening. Having decided not to come, he had been one of the earliest arrivals.

Stephen Ryland was cordial, but a few sentences exhausted all that he ever had to say to Kay's temperamental assistant, so he took the young man to the bar which had been set up in the dining room and left him abruptly. Coming back to find more congenial company, he caught Kay's eye and she laughed. There were always undercurrents between her and Stephen at their parties, things that they called to each other's attention with a word or glance, and were meant to be taken up afterward when they were by themselves. It was part of the fun.

Entertaining in her own house always roused a happy generosity in Kay. Her crowded working days limited her hospitality, and so she had a good appetite for it. She enjoyed the mixture of careful planning and clever improvisation that made a successful party. She liked the pretty panorama, the grace of arrivals, the blending of people, the reluctance of farewells, the afterglow.

The Governor came in now, cleaving a path among the guests by his own sense of importance. Beside him was his wife, smiling just enough. She wore no make-up, and her pale mouth looked oddly distinguished. Her dress, of exquisite black lace, was slightly out of style.

"How good of you, Kay, to have this lovely party, with all you have to do!" she exclaimed.

The Governor also expressed his pleasure at being present, and it was genuine. He badly wanted a drink, after having been forced to keep awake in the darkened auditorium. Stephen saw to that need at once. Kay brought the visiting artists and the Governor's wife together so deftly that the honor of presentation went both ways.

At this moment Daphne appeared at her elbow.

"Can you answer the telephone, Mrs. Ryland? It's Western Union."

Kay, thinking instantly of calamity and the boys, went immediately to the extension in the pantry. But the message came from Peter Philemon. She listened intently and then gave her reply.

SHALL LEAVE TOMORROW SATURDAY MEET YOU NEW HOTEL SUNDAY NIGHT OR MONDAY MORNING DEPENDING FLYING WEATHER THANKS AND LOVE KAY RYLAND

Putting down the receiver, she tried to recapture the mood of the evening and pick up the responsibilities of a hostess again. From her place at the buffet table she could see the patterns her guests made in the dining room and the drawing room which adjoined it. She saw and heard the admiration of the space, ease and boldness of color in the house. Tonight it was proving its

charm and beauty to these experienced and sensitive artists, to the Governor and his wife, who visited in the great mansions of the country, even to Lisa Bowes. None of them could condescend to the house where she and Stephen lived.

Davy Vail stood by himself, looking indifferent and rather bored. She beckoned him to her. "You see, Davy, I took your advice about a flash of Peruvian pink in this room."

"It's very good. The whole house is good. Both elegant and functional. It's very nearly perfect, of its kind."

"What's wrong with it?"

"I'm not sure that anything is. If there is, it's a lack, not a mistake."

"You may be right. We've lived here eight years and I love it, but once in a while I feel vaguely unsatisfied."

"Have you ever felt satisfied with a place where you live? Doesn't intimacy defeat satisfaction?"

"It shouldn't," she said quickly. "Of course not. It should increase it."

He said negligently, "I meant in places, not in people. By the way, who is the girl over there, the one who isn't screaming?"

"Which one?"

"The one who looks slightly like a Rossetti portrait."

Kay followed his eyes and description. It could be no one else. She said, "Oh, that is Lisa Bowes."

"Does she live here?"

"She does right now," said Kay. "She's been married a couple of times, so she may not be quite so much a blessed damozel as she looks. She was a Hanford, if that means anything to you."

"Not a thing. I don't care about her pedigree."

"You asked about her," Kay said, and went on. She found a certain relief in stating the facts about Lisa Bowes. "Her mother was a sister of the Governor's wife, but quite a different type of person. Lisa's very rich, I think, and her grandfather died last year and left her a lot more. That's why she's back here now, to settle that estate."

"You say she's married?"

"Not now. Her husband killed himself."

"There could have been many reasons," said Davy, "looking at the lady."

"Nobody seems to blame Lisa for it. I don't know her very well. Steve knows her better than I do, because he is handling the estate. He finds her stimulating. He enjoys talking to her because she's been everywhere and knows so many people."

There, that was all of it. Why was Davy looking at her like that? It couldn't be pity! The foolish fellow didn't think she wasn't happy—in her own house—at her own party. . . .

"Don't you want to come over and meet the Governor's wife, Davy? It might be useful for you to know her."

"No, thanks very much. Don't bother about me. I enjoy observing human nature among the Brahmins."

But Kay saw that within a few minutes he had found his way to Lisa Bowes. He was talking to her in the self-forgetful way that he had when he discussed music or some technique of beauty. Kay wondered whether Steve had seen them. Obviously he had. He was interrupting Davy, taking over the conversation. Now he was ignoring Davy, and his manner was almost possessive—did anyone else notice it?

She said to the Governor's wife, trying to be light about it, "Steve seems to be trying to rescue your niece from Davy Vail. To Steve, Davy is an incomprehensible character. He works for me, and is really talented in his field. Very musical too—Lisa might enjoy him."

"Lisa's always interested in people," said Mrs. Elston.

"Is she planning to live here now?"

"We do hope so. She seems to be so much happier than she was when she first came. She is a lovely girl and, as I'm sure you know, Kay, she's had a very difficult time. We—the Governor and I—would be so pleased to see dear Lisa settled down and really happy. With the right man. She needs someone to lean on, to take care of her. She hasn't the resources you have, Kay."

"I haven't many resources."

"You have your work. You've been so successful. Everyone knows how you love it and how much of yourself you give to it. Stephen's told me that sometimes you can hardly tear yourself

away from it when it's time to come home for dinner, that he often gets home before you do. But he's very understanding, isn't he?"

Kay said yes, he was. It wasn't possible to say anything else. But she did not like this picture of herself that Mrs. Elston was sketching in words. Why did Stephen tell such a thing about her? Didn't he explain that if she worked late it wasn't because she wanted to?

"I'm afraid that husband of mine wouldn't be so generous if I tried to have a career of my own," Mrs. Elston said with a rueful smile. "The Governor wants so much of my time for himself."

You can give it to him, thought Kay. You can afford to. You can give him your wealth, too. You didn't have to earn your dowry. You inherited it.

Do people think I neglect Steve? Has he given that impression of me to Lisa Bowes? I wish he would realize that there are other people in the room besides Lisa. Then Kay pulled herself up short. Pay no attention to this little infatuation of his. Ignore it, and don't mention it after people go home. Prove to him that you're not a jealous shrew. Prove it to yourself.

At last the guests were beginning to leave.

"Such a lovely party, Mrs. Ryland!"

"Kay, it's been one marvelous evening."

"Such perfectly delicious food, Kay. How ever do you manage to do all this on top of your work?"

Here was the Governor saying good night. "It's been a most enjoyable evening, Katherine. Mrs. Elston tells me that you're becoming quite famous in your chosen work. But mind you don't neglect that husband of yours. He may be called on for big things one of these days."

"You may be sure I won't neglect him, Governor Elston."

It sounds, thought Kay, as if they're definitely going to bring pressure on Steve to run for governor. But why is he making a point of my not neglecting Steve? Did he mean anything by that?

"Thank you for asking me," said Lisa Bowes.

She was wrapped in a pale satin cloak that was soft and rich like her voice, and she did not offer her hand to Kay, but only

those few words of thanks and a smile that seemed left over, an extra smile for a person she did not care about. There was certainly no offer of friendship in it.

Kay thought, of course she could not have come here tonight if there was anything more than a flash flirtation between her and Steve. Lisa probably has dozens of those, thinks little or nothing of them. Then why did she feel almost frightened when she returned Lisa's smile? Why angry, when there was nothing to be angry about?

It was natural, since Lisa was driving herself, that Stephen should go out with her and see that she got started. It was no more than courteous, Kay knew that. What was unnatural was her feeling of being deserted as her husband and Lisa went through the door into the night. She wanted to call after him, don't let this go any further, don't take a chance of wrecking all we have!

STEPHEN separated Lisa's car from the others parked around it and swung it into the breezeway, pushing off the lights. He moved quickly and angrily as if he were annoyed at what he was doing, and decisively as if he had planned this and wouldn't let anything stop him. He took her into his arms and kissed her deeply, trying to cancel the frustration he had felt all evening, the false situation with which he had compromised for hours.

"What a miserable evening!"

"I probably shouldn't have come."

"If you hadn't I wouldn't have been there either. We can't go on putting on this act, Lisa. We need each other. We aren't playing a game or having a flirtation. That's true, isn't it? Tell me it's true for you!"

"Nothing has ever been more true in my life."

He released her. "I've fought it as long as I can," he said. "It all came clear the other night when I left your house. I knew I was going in the wrong direction, away from the person I needed, who needed me. I knew it was wrong. I felt as if I were deserting the woman I loved."

"I felt deserted."

"Oh, my dear — my girl — "

"Do you know why I came tonight? To this house? To find out for myself if you belonged here. To sense it."

"I don't — didn't you feel that?"

"You actually seem lonely in it."

"I am lonely. And so are you in that old house. It's not going to go on. It's unfair to Kay too."

"How much do you think she suspects?"

"I don't know. I told you she spoke of seeing my car at your house a couple of weeks ago. But that was before even you and I realized how we felt. I knew I admired you, liked to be with you — but it wasn't the way it's been for the last week. I'm not going to fool myself or her any longer. The trouble has been to get a chance to talk to Kay. She never has time — "

"Not time for a husband," murmured Lisa as if it were incredible. "Then maybe she wouldn't care — "

"I'm afraid it would come hard until she got used to the idea."

"She has so much else in her life," said Lisa. "She's so successful and so much admired. Everyone was singing her praises tonight."

"They always are."

"She's amazing," said Lisa, without admiration. Then she added, "I've only one criticism of Kay."

"What's that?"

"She diminishes you."

"Diminishes me — how?"

"Subtly — perhaps without knowing it. By not needing you. Because she isn't able, apparently, to trust you with her life."

"Would you trust me with yours?"

"What am I doing now, Steve?"

She refused to let him drive home with her, but even after she had gone Stephen did not go back to the house immediately. He walked to the end of the driveway, trying to straighten out his emotions, his intentions and his reasons. He had not created this situation, he told himself. He was involved in it in spite of living decently, playing the game as Kay wanted it played. Diminished, he thought. That word had gone deep into his pride. When a man found a woman whose company increased his powers, who was beginning to find him indispensable to her, what was right?

He turned and went quickly back to the house. The big, handsome room was empty now, but there was a lingering feeling of excitement. He saw it as a good house, a big investment. He thought, she loves it and it would be all hers.

Kay came from the direction of the kitchen wing. She looked tired but brilliant.

"You gave a very successful party." Stephen spoke in a flat voice.

"I thought we gave it."

"Have it your own way. It's a technicality. Can I fix you a drink?"

She shook her head. "I'd better not, I want a good night's sleep. I've a terrific day coming up tomorrow. What do you suppose? Right in the middle of the party tonight I had a telegram from Phil. He's going down to Carolina with some of the directors of his corporation and wants me there day after tomorrow. Nice timing, isn't it?"

"What are you going to do?"

"What do you think? Go, of course. I took the job. I'll try to fly, but even if I'm grounded in Chicago I can make it by train by then."

Stephen did not seem concerned with time. He slowly poured a drink.

"Ida will take good care of you," said Kay.

"I can take care of myself."

Kay emptied a few ash trays into a dwindling fire at the far end of the room, and a light flame leaped up gratefully. "I told the barman you'd see him at the club and pay him," she said. "Don't you think fifteen dollars is enough?"

"I'll settle with him. Sit down for a minute, Kay. Just light somewhere, will you? I want to talk to you."

"About what?"

"About things that concern us both."

He felt the quick turn of her head rather than saw it. She was guessing, of course. Guessing right. You couldn't fool Kay.

"Not tonight," she said in a tightened voice. "I don't want to talk about anything tonight. I'm too tired —"

She almost fled.

THE PHONE was ringing when Daphne brought up the coffee tray the next morning.

"Hello, Jan," Kay said. "How are you. . . . What do you say? . . . Oh, how wonderful! Why, of course you must go to meet him! Oh, no, we'll manage. Just get your tickets and hop the plane and give him a kiss for me."

When Stephen came in a moment later, she was full of her news. "Oh, Steve, what do you think! Joe Clark is in Operation Big Switch after all! Janice had just about given up hope and now she's heard he's on the list. She's flying out to meet him — I don't know how they'll get along at the shop while I'm in Carolina — I must rush. There's your coffee — isn't it wonderful for Janice, with that baby on the way!"

"Yes, that's grand."

"I can remember how I felt once when I got news you were all right. There is absolutely nothing to equal it! Oh, I forgot to turn on the news."

Stephen said, "Let it go. There's something I want to say to you, Kay."

"Not now."

"Yes, now. You refused to listen to me last night. And that's not like you, Kay. It's not fair. You're forcing me to put on an act, to conceal — "

"All right. Go on. Say what's on your mind."

"To begin with, please believe me when I say that there's nobody — man or woman — on earth whom I admire and respect more than I do you. I'm grateful for all the years we've spent together. What's been between us is set apart."

"Apart from what?"

"Let me talk, Kay. I'm trying to be honest. People change as they go along, develop, find themselves. You've found yourself. You've become a very successful woman. You've made a career for yourself. It takes most of your life. It absorbs you — it crowds other things out."

"If that's what's worrying you, it won't be like this indefinitely. Right now things have piled up. But next year, when I've got more capital — "

"That isn't the point. What I've been realizing is that I'm no help to you. In fact, I'm in your way. I think you'd be better off without me."

"What do you mean — without you?"

"I mean that I think we should consider whether we really want to go on with our marriage."

It was said. Kay pulled the yellow painted silk robe, the one which he had given her on their fourteenth wedding anniversary, around her closely, as if for protection. She said, "I do."

For a moment that stopped him; then he remembered his decision. "You haven't thought it out."

"Don't you want to go on with me?"

"I've come to the decision that we — each of us — would do better apart, Kay."

"It's Lisa Bowes. You think you're in love with her. But you'll get over it, Steve. It's something that happens to a lot of men when they've been married a long time. They see a pretty woman, happen to be thrown in her company continually — it's physiological, psychological. But it doesn't last. Now you've told me — and thank you for doing it — let's never discuss it again."

"That won't do."

"You don't mean you want a divorce?"

"Don't say it that way. It's not death. Not murder. People get divorces every day. There's a constant stream of them through our law offices."

"Not for happy people — people like us."

"Are we so happy? Have we been so happy for the last few years? Or have we been putting up a front, Kay?"

She sat pale before him, and he was wretchedly sorry. He said, "Sometime we'd have to face this, Kay. You don't need me very much any more. And maybe I do need someone else very much indeed."

"But we have the boys!"

"I think they're old enough to face reality. They have many interests of their own, and that will be increasingly true from now on. The emotional lives of the adults around them don't interest or concern them deeply."

"Is that what Lisa says?"

It was. Stephen said coldly, "It's what I believe. I have to ask you to let me go, Kay."

The clock chimed, and automatically Kay looked at her watch. "I can't think about it now!" she said. "I haven't time. I have to get the work organized downstairs, and I have to be down at the shop in half an hour. With Janice not there, everything will be waiting for me. And I must take that plane this afternoon."

He looked ironic. "Doesn't this bear out what I've been saying? You haven't time for me. I'm in the way."

Kay said, "Steve, let's try to do better. Maybe I have been managing badly, not giving enough time to ourselves. Maybe we can get away somewhere as soon as this job for Phil is finished. I'll try to take on less work."

"That's not the answer, Kay."

She stood there, tall, tense, the sunlight playing on the gold robe. She said, "I'm not going to argue it. I have to go to work!"

CHAPTER 9

ON THE SECOND DAY, the rain — which had been so disappointing to Peter Philemon, eager to display the splendors of the new property to his fellow directors — stopped abruptly, leaving the great landscape clear.

"Now you can see something!" declared Philemon. "Come out and look from here, Kay."

She had been busy all day in the hotel building, which literally was rising around them. In spite of the rain there had been no letup in work, and the scope and possibilities of the project were as exciting as Philemon had promised her.

Now, as the sun swept the mountain slopes, the view was overwhelming, exalting. She stood with Philemon on the old stone terrace and tried to capture with her mind what her eyes could see. They were on the crest of the highest mountain, but other peaks circled the sky — some massive, some gentle, sheltering vineyards and orchards in their curves.

"Makes your troubles seem smaller, doesn't it, Kay?" Philemon



said. "Cuts them down to size. All this will be right here when they don't matter any more."

"Where do you get the idea that I have any troubles?" she asked, laughing to deny it.

"I took one look at you. When you got here."

"Don't worry about me, Phil. I'm all right," Kay said. "Everyone comes up against a difficult situation now and then. You just have to figure it out and that takes it out of you. How not to be . . . destructive, that's the important thing."

"I've been through the mill," he said vaguely. "So you like this location, do you?"

"It's wonderful. Tremendously exciting and yet, as you say, there's a sense of permanent calm."

"It got me when I first saw it, and it was a shambles then. A hotel like this will bring in plenty of money, managed right. This is a rich community. Some people come here for part of the year. Some settle in. They figure it's a good way to live longer, to get more out of life."

"And do they?"

"So they claim. They ride horses, hunt foxes, that sort of thing. You'll meet some of them tonight at that house where Frank Root is taking us for dinner."

Kay would rather have skipped going to a strange house to dine, but she did not argue, for she knew that she couldn't get out of it if Phil had made up his mind. And if he wanted her there, it was part of her job.

As she was driven with the two men along a graveled private road that wound up a heavily wooded hill, she was glad she had come. It was better than being alone and planning all over again what she would say to Steve when she went home, what she would do, how to be gayer, how somehow to reorganize her working schedule so as to have more time to be with Steve, how to be realistic about the relations of men and women.

It had been almost unbearably hard to leave Radisson after he had said outright that they should consider a divorce. No wonder I looked a wreck when I got here, thought Kay. It was such a shock. Of course I knew something was going on, but I was so sure he would get over it.

It helped to have distance between the sickening situation and herself. It became unreal, impossible, shrank sometimes in her mind to the size of a quarrel, which she could put right when she returned. The fear and anger came when she thought of Stephen and Lisa being together, saying what, doing what? Remember, Kay begged herself, what you thought when the plane couldn't land in that fog at Washington the other night and you thought it might crash. All you prayed for was a chance to see him again, to show him how you love him, to make a better marriage.

The drive broadened out on a flat summit where a country house spread itself comfortably; stone chimneys pressed against its redwood timbers, and enormous windows stretched toward views in all directions. Kay's eyes lighted with admiration at the balance and ease of the house. "Your friends must be very imaginative, Mr. Root. A house like this doesn't just happen."

"Bob Jennings knows what he wants," said Mr. Root. "Always has. And he can afford it."

"Is he retired?" asked Philemon.

"More or less. He pulled out of New York a few years ago, sold his seat on the stock market and came down here. He's gone in for horses. I'm not sure that he's too well. His wife — this present wife — is much younger."

Much younger. Kay estimated that Mrs. Jennings had only recently entered her thirties, and her husband was a gaunt, grayed man of surely more than sixty years. His squirelike clothes were perfectly suited to the place and occasion, but the blond Mrs. Jennings wore a sparkling dinner dress in the highest of style that would have been more at home in a night club.

The other guests were a pleasantly weather-beaten, middle-aged couple who lived on an adjoining estate and a young woman with an overbred look that approximated beauty. Her friends called the girl Fliss; she, it seemed, was married to Sam, who was not here. Fliss had come to hunt for the season.

"You don't ride?" Bob Jennings asked Kay. "It's great country for it. Why don't you at least come out and see the start of the hunt some morning?"

"I'm afraid I won't have time. I have to get back to my job."

"This is one of the leading interior decorators in the country," boasted Peter Philemon.

"Phil has to believe that. He hires me."

"Is your husband in the same business, Mrs. Ryland?"

"No, he's a lawyer."

"And quite a politician," Phil put in. "May be governor one of these days."

"Then you may know Governor and Mrs. Elston?" asked Jennings.

"Yes, indeed, I do."

"I've met him several times. Very able man."

"She was the older Wendell girl," said the weather-beaten woman.

Kay was placed now. Fitted into the mechanism of acquaintanceships that seemed to keep the world of these people running. Sometimes Kay thought they were absurdly dependent on it, but tonight she liked being one of its tiny parts. It gave her a feeling of security to be identified as Stephen's wife, linked with him as the girl called Fliss was linked with her absent Sam.

The conversation rambled as they sat on the fabulously glassed veranda. Young Mrs. Jennings, whose given name was Crystal, drank carelessly and fast.

"Oh, fill it up, Bob. What's the matter with you, stingy?" she asked impatiently.

"You know what martinis do to you."

"I'm among friends."

Fliss Savarin came to sit near Kay and asked questions. "Bob says you come from Radisson?"

Kay said she did. "Do you know our town?"

"I know a girl whose family came from there. And somewhere I heard that she'd gone back recently. Her name is Lisa Bowes. If she hasn't married again."

Before the name was spoken Kay had felt it coming. "That's still her name. She was at our house the other night."

"Really? Isn't it wonderful how everybody knows everybody! She used to be the loveliest creature. Is she still beautiful?"

"She's very attractive," said Kay.

"Poor Lisa. I'd love to see her. Wasn't that a tragedy about Jeff Bowes?"

"I don't know much about it," said Kay. And thought, I can find out more now. She asked, "Why did he kill himself?"

"There are all sorts of stories. I think he'd become a complete alcoholic, practically a mental case. Sam, my husband, said the most cynical thing when he heard about it. He said that Jeff would do anything Lisa wanted him to do. But Sam doesn't like Lisa. I tell him it's because he's trying to resist a yen for her."

"Is she a very old friend of yours?"

"Oh, yes, we were at Miss Nute's school together. I knew her down here, too, because we've been coming for years, and so did the Hanfords for several seasons. It was here that Lisa went overboard for that steeplechase jockey she married in the first place. She was just as determined to marry him as she was to marry Jeff. She waited nearly two years for Jeff Bowes to get his divorce, and she could have had a lot of other men."

Kay felt the shiver of her nerves. "He had a wife before?"

"Yes, Jeff was very much married and Daisy was a darling. But Lisa marked him for her own and that was that. I've heard that his divorce was one reason he could never get the kind of diplomatic post he was after. I wonder if Lisa ever regretted it. She certainly stuck to poor Jeff right to the end. But Lisa's always been proud and rather secret. You never know quite what she wants."

Kay moved away from Fliss Savarin. She could not bear any more talk about the attractions of Lisa Bowes. Yet, making no sense, she wanted to hear more, probe, find out.

Crystal was embarrassing her husband now and the guests were busy ignoring the situation. They went at last into the dining area, another plateau surrounded with glass. Mrs. Jennings stayed at the table through the first two courses and then left so swiftly that the men did not have time to rise to their feet.

"She'll be all right," Mr. Jennings said grimly. "Crystal is tired out. She's been doing too much."

But when they finally left the dining room, Fliss spoke to Kay. "One of us should go up and see how she is, I suppose. Will you pour the coffee for poor Bob? I'm so sorry for him."

"Let me go upstairs and see if I can do anything," said Kay. "He'd much rather have you to talk to."

Crystal Jennings lay on a sofa in her bedroom, her face pale with the exhaustion of nausea.

"I'm terribly sorry," she said as Kay approached her. "Sit down and have a cigarette. I always swear I'll never touch martinis again as long as I live. But they do give you a lift at the start of the evening as nothing else does."

"Your husband says you've been doing too much," said Kay. "It always hits harder when you're tired."

"Doing too much!" Crystal gave a derisive laugh. "Bob always tries to carry it off by saying I'm so frail and feeble. If he said bored, he'd be a whole lot closer. Tell me, do you like all this horsy stuff? Do you think horses are wonderful?"

Kay's laugh was genuine. "Maybe they are if you get to know them. I certainly don't. My job doesn't leave any time for that sort of sport."

"Lucky you. It's a lot of fun to have a job. It makes life so interesting. When I was working in New York — " Crystal Jennings sat up and arranged her hair with long, nail-resplendent fingers " — I really enjoyed my job. I worked in Radio City, did I tell you? On the floor where so many of the big studios are. I had a desk there. I had to tell people where to go when they came in, and keep things straight and not let anybody barge in without an appointment. The big shots used to come in every day for broadcasts and interviews. Opera stars, actors, politicians, Mrs. Roosevelt — it was a wonderful experience."

She was back in a different world as she spoke and Kay could see it, too. The big elevators were swinging open to let out the great and the freakish, and Crystal was the one to do the sorting out. This girl must have been the prettiest and most alert of receptionists, radiant and efficient. Where and when, she wondered, had Bob Jennings come into the picture?

"I think every girl should work," said Crystal Jennings.

"So do I."

"It's a funny thing," Crystal went on. "Before you're married, a man may admire you for being a business girl. It tickles him to hear you talk about your job. I used to go out to dinner with Bob a couple of times a week in New York — that was when we were getting acquainted — and did we have fun! He'd laugh his head off at some of the things I'd tell him. But after you're married it's not so good to talk about your job. It demeans you. Because you earned your living you're not so good as the girls who never had to lift a hand. Of course it's entirely different with you because you're top-flight and so successful — "

"It's not different at all. I go through the same thing."

"Doesn't your husband like to hear about your work either?"

"More or less. Let's go down, shall we?"

Kay suddenly wanted beyond endurance to get to a telephone which would let her hear Stephen's voice again. She took Crystal back to the beautiful living room, and after an hour or so of conversation she whispered to Peter Philemon that they must go.

"You certainly saved that evening," Phil congratulated her when they were on their way back to the inn where she was staying. "It wasn't very comfortable there for a while until you got Mrs. Jennings back into circulation."

"Yes, you were very tactful," said Mr. Root. "Poor old Bob."

"That's what usually happens," Phil said, "when a man like that picks up a girl out of some office and marries her. She's like a fish out of water, isn't she, Kay?"

"She's like a working girl out of a job."

"Though she wasn't unattractive," added Phil, "when she sobered up and got to talking at the end of the evening."

Root said, "Bob should have had more sense than to marry a girl like that."

Kay said, "Crystal Jennings is the one I'm most sorry for."

"You needn't be," said Mr. Root. "That girl will have a couple of million dollars in the end, if she behaves herself."

"She won't behave," answered Kay. "It will be the same tomorrow or the next day."

"Well," said Philemon, "anyway, it was something to see that place. I hope you're not too sorry you came along, Kay."

"I'm very, very glad. It's something to remember."

BACK in her room at the inn, Kay put in a call to Stephen. There was no answer but she told the operator to keep trying. It was almost three hours before she reached him.

"Is that you, Kay? Anything wrong?"

"No, everything's fine." Don't ask him where he's been. He's home now. "How are things there? Ida feeling all right?"

"Apparently. I haven't been here much."

Has he been spending every evening with Lisa?

"Steve, I'm going home by way of New York, to buy some materials. I promised the boys a week-end there, so this might be a good time. Can't you come, too?"

"That wouldn't be possible. I have to be here Saturday for a dinner the Governor is giving for the Norwegian Ambassador."

"Oh, I'm sorry I can't be there." She paused. "I might be able to get through with my buying on Friday — "

"It's not necessary to change your plans or disappoint the kids," he said quickly, definitely. "I told Mrs. Elston you'd be out of the city."

He did not want her to come back on Saturday. She sat holding the telephone in silence.

"It's late," he said, "and you sound tired. Better turn in. Good night."

That was all there was. She reminded herself that long-distance calls are nearly always unsatisfactory. She comforted her restless, aching self with that other self that had been disciplined to remember that there was work to do tomorrow. But morning was breaking over the mountains when she fell asleep.

The little traveling clock gave her two hours of oblivion before it sounded its alarm, and then she bathed, dressed, used the familiar techniques — cold water, a few exercises — to shake off fatigue. Philemon was leaving this morning. She would finish what had to be done and then she could take the evening train to New York.

She went down to the dining room and drank three cups of coffee as she studied a railway time card.

"You want to take the Crescent," said Philemon, sitting down across from her. "That's the fast one. It stops here on signal."

"Yes, I know. I'm looking up trains from Boston to New York. The boys are coming down to meet me for a couple of days."

"Is Steve joining you?"

"No, he can't make it." The hurt came back so violently that her voice trembled. Her anger bent on Philemon. She resented the concern in his eyes which proved she had not spoken easily and probably did not look normal.

She said, "Excuse me, Phil, I must be on my way. I've a date with some workmen up on the mountain. If I don't see you again

before you leave, happy landing. I'll give your New York office a ring if I strike any snags up there, and you can count on my keeping within the estimate."

But Peter Philemon was not easily put off. He appeared at the building site a few hours later and walked with her to the far end of the unfinished great lounge. There he stood against the empty frame of a huge window, his face toward it. He looked heavy, small, worldly and scarred against the scene without.

"Is this job going to be too much for you, Kay?" he asked at length.

"No, what makes you think so? Aren't you — and the others — satisfied with what I'm doing?"

"If it's the work, if Steve objects to your being down here, let's call it off. I don't want to make trouble for you. Last time I saw him he was objecting to your doing so much work."

"But there's nothing like that, Phil. I'm grateful for this contract. It means a lot to us this year. No — I've been bothered a little but not about the job. Steve doesn't really care what I take on. As a matter of fact, he often doesn't know."

"Steve doesn't appreciate you," said Phil deliberately. "Now don't stop me. Let me say my say. I like Steve. He's a nice fellow, and he has brains. But when I say he doesn't know what he's got when he's got you, I mean just that. Maybe there's a reason. Some men don't like it when a woman gets too big for them."

"What terrible nonsense! I'm not too big for anybody. Least of all Steve."

"I know you wish I'd keep my mouth shut," he said. "Maybe what I say will mean we can't do business together in the future. But I'll say it anyhow. There's only one thing puts a look on a person's face like you had when you came here, and again this morning. It's because you've been hurt where it hurts most. By the only person who can hurt you that much. I don't know what is going on between you and Stephen. But I felt trouble when I came to your office last time and he was there. All right, I'll mind my own business. But I want you to know I'm here and waiting. You say to me that I should get married. I don't want anybody but you and I've wanted to tell you for a long time."

"I — I wish you hadn't told me."

He grinned. "Feels good to let it out in the air," he said. "Understand me, though, I don't want any man's wife. If you love Steve, if you stay married to him, there's nothing for me. But if the time ever comes when that changes, here I am."

"It won't change, Phil."

"I'm no beauty, Kay. I'll never hold public office. I'm not too well educated. But I understand business and I like a businesswoman. Not many men do. I don't want an adding machine any more than the next man — I like a pretty woman. But I want her good and I want her brainy, and it all adds up to the girl you are."

"Phil, don't — this tears me to ribbons! I'm so fond of you!"

"Has my saying this spoiled everything else?"

"No. I don't think so. I shan't let it. I feel so grateful, so proud. I need to be wanted. I was afraid of this, but it's made you even more my friend. Forever and deeper, Phil. But not again, Phil, never, please — "

"You just remember," he said, and was off.

CHAPTER 10

THE GOVERNOR'S wife came into her husband's study with the seating diagram for the dinner they were giving for the Ambassador from Norway and his party. "I hope you'll think this is about right," she said. "Thank heaven they all speak English. You have the wife of the Ambassador beside you, of course, and I put Mrs. Morley on your left since he's a Supreme Court judge. Remember that she's a little deaf, and won't wear a hearing aid. So silly of her at her age."

He reached up his hand to find hers and held it as he scanned the plan. He was a very affectionate man and liked to feel that she was close.

"How many did we scale it down to?"

"Twenty-four. It's all the room will hold, even with the large banquet top on the table."

"Who is this here? I can't read the name."

"Oh, that's Lisa."

"Why is she coming to this affair? Not that I'm not fond of Lisa."

"I mentioned it to you the other day but perhaps you weren't listening. I have to have an unattached woman because Kay Ryland is away on business."

"Her business ought to be Steve more of the time."

"I do feel a little sorry for him sometimes. You see, I put him by Lisa. She likes him very much."

"Better not start anything," he said casually. "Steve's a very attractive fellow."

"Kay Ryland is the one who should remember that."

The Governor released her hand and swung around to look at his wife. "Is anything going on there? How much is Lisa seeing of Steve?"

"Why, I don't know. I suppose very little. But they must meet here and there."

"Steve has to be careful. He's in a public position. I hope Lisa realizes that."

"People aren't as stuffy as they used to be, Hugh. Lisa and Stephen would make a wonderful couple, if things were different."

"I hope you don't go around saying that!" he exclaimed.

"Now, Hugh, what do you think I am? I wouldn't breathe such a thing outside this room. But he is so exactly the kind of man that Lisa should have married in the first place."

SEATED that night at the strategic point in the wide curve of the table, the Governor reflected that this kind of dinner was useful. In addition to the political exchange of information and opinion, it enabled him to make a special impression on the Ambassador. The entertaining tonight was probably as elegant as the foreign visitors would find anywhere in the country.

He would regret giving up the Mansion, and the position that went with it. In the state this was the highest place. In Washington he would be one among many peers. But in the Senate there was the longer term, and fewer campaigns. No governor was wise to hold on too long. Better to pick out a successor when the time was ripe and leave the job in good and friendly hands.

Governor Elston's glance went around the table, seeking Stephen Ryland, sizing him up again in this company. He fitted in very well. A fine-looking man, intellectual, healthy, vigorous, and he had good manners. He pleases people, thought the Governor. They're paying attention to what he's saying.

Whatever Stephen was saying, those near enough to hear were listening with interest. Especially Lisa Bowes. Her neck and shoulders were bare above her black dress, and the Governor was aware of the dazzling effect. Stephen Ryland had better watch his step. He was in the public eye and Lisa was a beautiful woman. There was something about that couple tonight at his table that disturbed Governor Elston. It stemmed from his wife's conversation earlier in the day. He had a sense of danger, of the runaway possibilities of the situation, as he saw those naked shoulders so close to Stephen's black coat.

Of course, if things were different, nothing could be more satisfactory than a match between those two. A girl like Lisa, with all her money to be looked after, would stabilize Stephen by increasing his re-




Juliette Lida Renault

sponsibilities. He had a tendency to be too independent, too idealistic. If he were connected with the family, there would be little chance of his going off on some political tangent. But there was nothing to do about it. He looked again at Stephen and Lisa and thought, with considerable mental emphasis, I must tell Marcia to be very careful not to encourage anything between those two. I wouldn't want to be responsible.

THE RESPONSIBILITY was Stephen's. He was impatient to take it on, and he chafed at the present delay. He wanted to shoulder all the blame and any punishment that would be involved, whether personal or political. But Lisa must be protected.

Nor did he want Kay publicly blamed. He was not going to offer criticism of her to anyone as defense for himself. But he had kept up a slow fire of resentment against his wife since she had gone away. She had treated him like a fool who didn't know his own mind, like a husband who had been cheating and come sheepishly to her to confess. Stephen felt that he had attempted to bring Kay—with honesty, respect, and affection, too—one of the most important decisions of his life. Her answer had been that it wasn't important, that his feeling was trivial, that she'd forgive him. And she didn't have time to talk about it.

This was no mere flirtation. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before. The main thing in his life had been love of Kay; he had thought he had all the joy, excitement and companionship any man might want. Now he was convinced that he had only been contented because he had not met Lisa, nor realized that he had always lacked her. He had to be sure of that. His honesty and self-respect would not let him go from one woman to another without reorganizing his emotional and family life.

There was going to be unpleasant exposure and cruelty, no matter how hard he might try to avoid those things for his wife and sons. But the justification for cruelty was that beyond it lay happiness and permanent good. For Kay herself, even if she wouldn't believe it now. Pain and embarrassment for her, perhaps for the boys in smaller measure, would be inherent in divorce. Such ties as they had could not be broken easily. But it must be

done. Lisa could not be left out of his life much longer without greater cruelty to her than to Kay, as well as deprivation to himself which he felt would leave him always unfulfilled.

Lisa wanted him to run for governor, so Stephen had an additional reason for that ambition now. Divorce and remarriage were going to be bad hurdles. But, as he'd said to Kay that night when she had told him that scandal would hurt him politically, he was resolved to be open and aboveboard with the public.

As soon as Kay would let him. And Ralph Lamson should be able to persuade her that this was no trivial affair. He had decided only tonight that it would be best if someone other than himself put it up to Kay. Lisa had been right about that. She was right about the other thing too. It would be less painful and more decent if he left their house before Kay returned to it.

These things had been settled a couple of hours before the dinner at the Mansion. Stephen had called for Lisa, arriving earlier than was necessary, coveting the half hour alone with her. Signe, the gaunt servant with the sour face, had let him in and said that Mrs. Bowes was dressing but would be down soon.

He went into the library to wait for her and Signe followed. She spoke, stiffly, carefully. "Mr. Ryland, could you tell me when that money Mr. Wendell left Berne and me will be paid?"

"I don't know exactly, Signe. Within six or seven months probably. There are a good many formalities. Why?"

"We'd like to have it. It would help Berne and me right now. He's a sick man."

"You could get the bequest almost any time that Mrs. Bowes wants to arrange it. Part or even all of your claim on the estate could be advanced if she thought it advisable. Why don't you speak to her about it?"

"It would be better if it came from you," said Signe. "We'd be grateful if you'd mention it, Mr. Ryland."

She left abruptly, perhaps hearing a light step on the stairs, for almost immediately Lisa came in. After Stephen had told her how beautiful she was and held her in his arms for a long minute, she said that they needn't hurry. "I told Signe to bring us a cocktail."

Signe was impassive as she served them. When she had gone Stephen asked, "How do you get a smile out of her?"

"I don't try. She doesn't like me and it's mutual. We are disagreeable necessities to each other."

"She seems very eager to get her legacy and Berne's from the estate. She just spoke to me about that."

"Why should they be in such a hurry for it? They pay no rent and they have very good food and high wages. Their trouble is that Berne thinks he has something wrong with him and they want to go back to Sweden. Some doctor has been scaring him."

"As executor, you know, you could easily advance them the legacy now."

"But, my love, I don't want to! If they had that money they'd probably walk out on me. Then what would I do? As long as I don't let them have it I have them right under my thumb and the estate doesn't have to be settled for a long time."

Stephen was taken aback. He had thought that he would only have to tell Lisa that the transaction was legal and possible. He didn't like her holding out on the old servants, especially as the sum was so small in comparison with the size of the estate.

He said, "Is Berne really sick?"

"He certainly doesn't look it. He gets around all right. My guess is that he and Signe cooked up the whole story. They want to spend the money on that trip. But from what my aunt tells me, I wouldn't be able to find two other servants in the whole city. They won't work in a house like this. And while I could stay here alone—"

"You couldn't possibly do that."

"I'd have to. Steve, I want to stay on in this house until—until we know where we are, at least. It's a refuge. It's my own place. I'd feel so exposed in an apartment house or hotel."

It came back to him again, his responsibility. He said, "I know it's hard on you. And I want so much to make it easy. As soon as Kay comes back, we'll settle everything. Kay's the most generous person in the world. She'll understand when I talk to her next time—"

"Are you going to do that yourself, Steve?"

"It has to be done."

"But not by you. Someone should talk to Kay who won't hurt or humiliate her as much as you would. Not that you'd want to, Steve, but you couldn't help doing it. Isn't there some lawyer you like and trust in your own firm?"

"I never thought of that," said Stephen slowly. "But there's Ralph Lamson. She's very fond of Ralph and he is of her."

Lisa added no persuasion. Now there was no need.

"I believe I'll have a talk with him," Stephen continued. "He'd treat it as completely confidential, and Kay would be frank with him. I'm pretty sure she'd be reasonable, even if she blew up with me afterward."

"Ah — don't let that happen. It leaves scars."

"Hard to avoid when she comes home. Under the same roof."

"But should you be there?"

"For the time being what else can I do?"

"There's nothing else you could do?" she said.

"I could move to the club — I was angry enough to think of doing that the morning Kay left. But I knew if I did the fat would be in the fire. Everyone would know we'd separated."

"It only advances the date, doesn't it? . . . If there's to be a date . . . but maybe there isn't?"

"Oh, yes, there is!" he said violently, and faced up to it. If he did go to the club before Kay came back from New York that would bring things down about their ears with a crash. That would settle it. Why not? Wasn't that the best way?

Lisa was saying, not as if she were pressing a point but as if she were trying to help him, "If people are going to gossip about you, why not let them do it now and have it over with? Better now than later, if you're going to run for office next year. They forget in no time. A lot of people probably wonder how you and Kay get along together anyway. When they have the answer they'll accept your decision."

"Why should anyone wonder about Kay and me? There's never been anything to gossip about in connection with us."

"Maybe not," she said doubtfully, "but everyone seems to know that Kay has a life of her own. And she's rather a conspicuous

person. She's seen around with young Vail and she goes off to meet this Peter Philemon. People are bound to wonder."

"But that's crazy," he said impatiently. "She employs that fool Vail because she thinks he's good in that kind of job."

"Of course. He's very artistic."

"And as for Phil, she works for him. If she takes on a job for him down South or anywhere else, they have to get together on it."

"Why isn't she here fighting for you? Doesn't it show what she wants most? To me it's incredible that any job should matter more than you."

"Kay's heavily involved," he said slowly. "There's a big financial angle for her to consider. She has quite a payroll."

"I know. She's big business. That's why I don't believe that people would be surprised at what she might do with her life. Or at what you might do with yours. People think you've been wonderful. My aunt is a very conventional woman. But she is putting you next to me at dinner tonight. It's her way of accepting a situation, I think."

"Very kind."

"And she leads her husband around by the nose, though he isn't smart enough to realize it. She can get around him for us."

"Look here, Lisa, I don't want any finagling like that! I'll tackle the Governor myself, when the time comes."

"Why, of course—I'm just saying that she's fond of us both. I suppose we must go now. How I love going with you, Steve! It makes a beautiful pattern."

Now, at the dinner for the Ambassador, with Lisa's presence beside him tacitly expressing the approval of Mrs. Elston, he was conscious of what she meant by the pattern and its beauty. It was not only that she was beside him; she seemed to blend her presence with his. He could feel the motion of her body, often bearing toward him without touching him, as if a wind of feeling carried her that way. There was yielding in the pattern. Possession too. Once he thought curiously, I'll have to hold my own. But just then she smiled at him and agreed so completely with what he was saying that it made him proud and tender.

IT WAS NOT a late party, and after Stephen had brought her home Lisa read in bed for a while — something she always did before going to sleep. Even when she was almost exhausted, she would begin to read — a tale of adventure, a history, a political summary — and usually her nerves would relax. She liked to take her mind out for exercise when her emotions were tired. In this much-prized hour she became an individual who was content in the company of her own intelligence.

It was not always possible. There had been times when her nerves had been so shattered that no print could detach her from the facts of her own life. Tonight, for example, it was very difficult to concentrate. Yes, she thought, I must have Steve. He's handsome and intelligent and exciting. He'll be more exciting when he gets that wife of his completely out of his mind.

Strange to have come upon a man she wanted here. In this city where she had been a child. In this house which had been the sound, respectable source of family departure. Now it was her own. Steve and I might live here for a while, Lisa thought, until he is elected governor. Of course he will be. This divorce won't do him any harm. Marcia will say things in the right places and tell me who are the people I'll need to make up to. I'm good with politicians. Kay Ryland doesn't seem to have any close friends. There won't be much sympathy for her. Why should there be? For a woman who doesn't try to hold her husband.

It's bad luck to have to go through all this again, to wait for another man to get a divorce. But it will be a quicker business this time. Steve's wife isn't like Daisy. Daisy hung on even after the divorce, even after Jeff and I were married and in Paris, always waiting for him to come back to her.

She tried every trick in the book — not that it helped her much. But Jeff never got over feeling sorry for her. That was at the bottom of what happened to him, that and his sense of guilt. The worse he acted, the more he hated himself. He never forgave himself for loving me — between the times he hated and tried to shame me. Hated me more because I would not go down to degradation with him, or admit that I was guilty too.

But I wasn't responsible. What I said wasn't enough. There

was no proof that he thought I wanted him to kill himself. Just that incoherent note, and he didn't know what he was writing.

When I marry Steve, I'll forget about it, she thought. I'll be more in love with him than I was with Jeff. I need to be. I can be. How long is this wretched divorce going to take?

CHAPTER 12

THE BOYS went back to school on an afternoon train from Grand Central Station. Kay had planned to leave by plane later that evening, but a heavy fog canceled all air transportation, and the only alternative was to go by train.

For Mark and Colin the few days in New York had not held a dreary minute. They were feeling experienced and worldly.

"Why, sure, we can find the right car!"

"Good-bye, we had a swell time."

"Tell Dad about the fellow in the show that looked like him."

"Thanks again for the swell camera."

They kissed her good-bye with the awkward formality of young men who no longer yield to any emotion in public, and went through the gates, Colin ahead, always eager for the next experience. Mark looked back once, his eyes seeking his mother through the crowd, and he waved. Kay knew that partings always hurt Mark, no matter what he pretended. She often felt in him her own sensitiveness to separation and wished he had been spared it.

She waved and tossed a kiss, holding like a shield the thought that they were as safe, as untroubled and as well directed as boys could be. She thought with satisfaction of the new sweaters, pajamas and socks which she had found time to buy and pack neatly in their suitcases. Kay had explained to the boys why Stephen could not join them, laid on thick the importance of his presence at the dinner for the Ambassador. The boys were very proud of Stephen. He wouldn't do anything to damage that pride, she told herself, as the other thought went by in her mind.

ARRIVING at the familiar station next morning, Kay felt that her first obligation should be to stop at her office. Things were

probably at sixes and sevens there, for Davy Vail was no organizer and Janice Clark was still away. But she gave the taxi driver her home address. It was only a little after nine o'clock, and Stephen might not have left the house yet. She wanted to establish their meeting, to tune it right. She would tell him all about the fun with the boys, ignoring the affair with Lisa Bowes completely. She must make Steve see and feel as she did, that the basic things were their children, their home, the long continuity of their love.

His car was not in its stall. He had gone to work early. Perhaps it was just as well. The evening was a more mellow time.

Ida greeted her as she entered. "Well, Mrs. Ryland, I'm glad to see you back."

"Not so glad as I am to be back. How is everything?"

"All right. There's not much to do, with Mr. Ryland away."

"Did you say Mr. Ryland is away?"

"Yes, he left yesterday afternoon."

"I suppose he was called out of town suddenly and couldn't get in touch with me."

Daphne appeared through the pantry door, looking like a housemaid in a stage play. This is *all* like a play, thought Kay, even the curiosity — is it that? — in the girl's glance.

"How have you been getting along, Daphne?"

"It's been all right."

"The house looks lovely. It's so good to be home! Bring my bags up, will you? And Ida, if you'd make me a cup of coffee, it would be wonderful."

There'll be some word upstairs.

"I'd like to speak to you, Mrs. Ryland," Daphne said.

"Not just now, if you don't mind."

When the girl had gone, Kay went quickly to their bedroom and opened his wardrobe. Why had he taken all those clothes? Practically all he had that was wearable. He hadn't — no, he wouldn't — he expects me to call the office — there might be a message on the telephone pad by my bed.

No. But it was in the second place in which she looked, in her middle dressing-table drawer. She thought, half hysterically, it should be on the pincushion. That's what they do. This wasn't

like Steve, to hide a letter in her drawer. She was afraid of the envelope in her hand, of the page she was pulling out of it.

Dear Kay,

All things considered I think it is much better for me to be off the lot when you return. I hope your trip was a great success and that you and the kids had a fine time together. If anything urgent should come up I can be reached at the office or the club, where I have taken a room. However, I believe personal conversation is inadvisable and would only be disturbing to you. I have asked Ralph Lamson to talk with you at your convenience. Please believe, Kay, that I'm trying to figure out the best way to make this easy for all concerned, especially you.

As ever, Steve

Kay denied it, whispering, "God, no — he couldn't — "

But there it was. His wardrobe was almost empty. His blue silk robe was gone. I gave him that. Don't faint, don't be sick.

"Here's your coffee, Mrs. Ryland."

"Thank you, Daphne." Kay put the note deep in the pocket of her suit coat, crumpling it down so that no edge could show.

"Mrs. Ryland, I hate to bother you right now but I'd like to speak to you about something."

Kay moistened her lips. What did the girl mean by "right now"?

"What's on your mind, Daphne?"

"I'm going to get married quite soon — at the end of the month. That would be a week from yesterday."

"That's very soon."

"But you won't need me."

You know he's gone, thought Kay. You were an extravagance to keep the house charming for Steve. A duty to Judge Hunt.

"Who is the young man? The one you've been going about with?"

"Oh, yes, he wouldn't let me go with no one else."

"Are you both sure?"

Daphne giggled. It was a strange sound to Kay. "Flick says he's never been so sure about anything. Can I leave today?"

"Yes."

Somebody dies, somebody else is born. Someone's happiness is killed, your happiness, the long happiness you've worked for. This girl's happiness is born but she hasn't worked for it. She brings nothing to the man but herself. Perhaps that's the best way. . . . Hang on to your nerve, your control.

She told Daphne to unpack for her and what to send to the cleaners. She told Ida that it didn't matter what they had for dinner. No, she'd be alone. Mr. Ryland wouldn't be back tonight.

CHAPTER 13

RALPH LAMSON always carried his body as if he felt that it took up more than its fair share of room. He would choose a chair that was too small for him and draw his feet under the edge of it. He was doing that now in Kay's office. His glance was almost diffident, and he was given to long pauses in conversation. Sometimes other people could not endure these pauses, and filled them with outpourings of things they had not meant to say, which could be very revealing to a lawyer.

Kay had made an unwilling concession in seeing him. At first she had refused, said that there was no need. That he sat in her office now was proof of his quiet effectiveness in negotiation.

"I regret this errand of mine, Katherine," he said. "Steve came to me about ten days ago with very bad news."

He allowed a pause, but Kay left it empty. At length he went on, "What he told me was that your marriage had come to an end."

Kay said, "As far as I'm concerned, that isn't true. I don't feel that way about it, Ralph."

"I shall be very glad if you are right. I have a great admiration and affection for you both."

"I suppose Steve has told you that he asked me to consider a divorce. I won't do that. There is no reason for it, at least no reason that's worth breaking up our home for. We've been married seventeen years — we have two children who have to be considered. Besides, I think a divorce would ruin him. I'm not going to let Steve throw everything away, scrap his ambitions and his career. Until Lisa Bowes came back here, we were perfectly happy."

"I took the liberty of asking Steve about that. He seemed to feel that there have been other problems. Your work — "

"My work has never been a problem between us."

"He thinks you work too hard. That seems to trouble him. It may be that he feels at fault for it."

"Oh, that's nonsense," she said impatiently. "Of course I work hard. But that's all right. I like my work."

"Steve made that point too. That your pleasure in your work would be to some extent a compensation for his own defection. He also said that without him you'd have less expense and more scope for accomplishment."

"That's just an excuse. Did you believe any of that?"

"He seemed to believe it. Which is the important point."

He continued in his sober, exact way, "At first when Steve told me what had happened, I was very unsympathetic. Impatient with what I thought was — transient desire. But as we talked, and a great deal of our talk was rather impersonal, I began to be a little sorry for the guy."

His gentle, slightly ironic smile met no answering one.

"Why? Why were you sorry for him?" she demanded.

"Because what he wants, I believe, is not just this woman. It seems to go beyond that to a need that is quite primitive. A man's need to feel that a woman is dependent on him."

"Lisa Bowes wouldn't be dependent! She's tremendously rich."

"She wouldn't be financially dependent. And yet she might satisfy that need I spoke of. A man may have a rich wife whose life merely complements his own."

"I know," Kay said, thinking of Governor Elston and his wife.

"A woman may play it that way, Katherine. She accepts a certain role. She has no independent setup, isn't a rival bread-winner, though her husband may benefit from her fortune. The point is that being a wife is her only job. The instinct of many men for this dependent factor in their lives exists — though, as I say, it may be primitive."

"Primitive is the right word," said Kay. "So is obsolete. So is impossible."

"Very often, no doubt."

"Listen, Ralph," she said. "I went on working after I was married because I had to. So do hundreds of thousands of girls and women. Millions. They work because there's no other way to have homes with the men they love and children while they are young. More than half the women who have jobs outside their homes are married. It's the only thing most girls have for a dowry these days, a little earning power. They haven't any fortunes or fine, full hope chests. But a girl can say to a man, 'I will bring you forty dollars a week after we are married.'"

"Not a bad bargain."

"And she keeps it. She has to. Marriage is under a new dispensation today, Ralph."

"The male is still the male."

"But under new conditions," she said. "Family life — even the life between a man and a woman — has a different pattern when a woman goes out to work every day. It's always been our pattern. I don't know how much Steve told you about our early life. Maybe he doesn't remember. But it was this way with us — "

Ralph Lamson did not even move his cramped body as she began to tell him.

Kay said, "Steve has a fine family background, you know. The Ryland name is in the regional history books and all that. But he had no money at all when I met him. His father lost everything in 1929, and Steve says that he died of shock and shame, though they said it was a heart attack. It practically killed his mother too, but not immediately. She went to live with his only sister, who was married and lived in California. Steve stayed here, where his name stood for something. He had some financial help when he was going to the University. But there wasn't enough to carry him into graduate work, and he wanted to study law. I was going to the University too, though I never finished — "

She seemed to halt herself by that statement, and Ralph Lamson wondered why. But in his calm patience her story took root again.

"We used to eat together in the dining hall sometimes. And we were in the same section in political science and used to argue about things. Steve told me how much he wanted to be a lawyer. I used to figure even then that if I could get a job and earn some

money I might help him. I wasn't thinking in terms of marriage. I didn't think Steve would ever ask me. But we were good friends and I wanted him to be a lawyer as much as he wanted it. It was practically my personal ambition. Am I boring you?"

"You certainly are not," said Lamson. He could picture the handsome, rather princely boy and the ingenuous girl with the beautiful eyes — she was probably not so handsome then as now, but the intensity of her interest and sympathy with his ambitions would have flattered any boy.

"I'm going back to this," Kay said, "only because I want to explain Steve's attitude and mine, from the very beginning. Anyway, for various reasons, I didn't graduate. I had to leave the University in my senior year. That was pretty much of a blow at the time, and I was in kind of a fog for a while and completely lost track of Steve. I was working in a department store here, selling curtains — I'd majored in art and decoration at college. Then — about a year later I met Steve in a cafeteria downtown.

"He had a job in the courthouse, but it didn't amount to much. The only thing he liked about it was that he worked next door to the County Attorney's office and picked up political stuff. Steve has always been interested in politics, and he's told me since that the job was very useful."

For the moment she had forgotten Lamson's errand.

"Steve has a major talent for politics," said Lamson, "but I'm glad he went on with the law too."

"He didn't think he would at first. He told me that he'd given up the idea of being a lawyer. But of course he couldn't. It was in his blood. So he began to study nights. And after that we saw a good deal of each other — and we were married. We couldn't possibly have married on what Steve was making in the courthouse. And he wouldn't have had enough money even for books and night school. We figured it very closely, and with what both of us were making we could do it, though there wasn't any leeway. Steve worked terribly hard. And when you can't give studying your full time, it takes a long time to make the grade.

"Anyway, we never questioned my working too. It wasn't a question of a career, Ralph. When you're a saleswoman in a

department store, you don't think in those glamorous terms. You think of getting a pay check, and rent and heat and groceries, and maybe a little beer party on Saturday night. Steve and I never argued about my working. It was the only way we could live together. Even when I had my first child, I kept on my job as long as I could."

"And you've kept right on working."

"Well, we kept on needing the money. Steve was taken into the Jelke firm when he was admitted to the bar in 1939. But less than two years later he went into the Navy."

"In justice to Steve, he seems to feel that he has lost you to your work. That your success, the demand for your ability, crowds him out of your life."

"I didn't crowd him out! He ran away."

"Your resentment has my full sympathy, Katherine."

"Please—" she protested. "Did he say that if I stopped working altogether and stayed home everything would be all right? Is that what he wants?"

The lawyer made no answer. She was sure he had asked Stephen that question.

"Of course it isn't! He wants Lisa Bowes. As for my working, Steve likes to live well, wants the boys in one of the best schools—we couldn't possibly live the way we do on what he makes."

"He's rather bitterly conscious of that."

"Why, even if he were governor, I'd have to keep on earning. You have to have more than the salary to be governor in this state. And now that we're on that subject—have you talked to him about what he's doing to ruin himself? Does he think he can have Lisa Bowes and a scandal and the governorship too?"

"I want you to see the situation whole," Lamson said slowly. "Divorce never helped any candidate for public office. But this is a most unusual case. You're not a woman to excite public pity. You're young and beautiful. You have talent, prestige, are known to make large sums of money. There may be people who, in ignorance or jealousy, or because they dislike those modern adjustments in married life that we were talking about, might build up a case for Steve on false premises."

"They'd say that it was my fault? That I neglected my home and my husband? Yes, I suppose they might."

"I won't give you less than the truth as I see it. You're up against the very heavy odds of Steve's pride, his feeling for another woman, and the woman herself. For Lisa Bowes isn't casual about this. She wants a husband and she probably wants to be the wife of the next governor. She wants the man you married, and I would be a poor friend if I minimized her ability to get him."

"So what do you advise me to do?" she asked.

"As I told you, Katherine, this is not an errand I like." He felt her hostile withdrawal now and stood up, his big head held meekly at an angle that was not dogmatic. "I think you would be wise to let me tell Steve that he may go his way, that you accept his failure even if you cannot condone it. He charged me with some practical messages too, which I want to deliver. He wants to assume full responsibility for the children's education and maintenance. He would like to retain the privilege of seeing them, but during their minority he would accept your decision on that. He will back up whatever explanation for this separation you wish to make to them, with whatever blame to himself. Also he wants to turn over to you all real property—"

"Don't bother to go on, Ralph. I'm not making a deal or listening to one. What you can tell Steve is this. That I will not discuss a divorce. If he can get rid of me in some way, that's up to him. I won't be the one to break up our marriage. I married him for good—not until he was tired of me."

CHAPTER 14

THE GOVERNOR said that he knew nothing whatsoever about it. "I don't have time to listen to those stories," he told the three men who were having a private consultation with him.

Haines, who had bluntly brought the matter up, said that he never listened to them either. "But," he went on, "if there is any funny business going on, we wouldn't want it to break in our faces in a campaign year, Governor. It could wreck the whole ticket, not just Ryland."

Giles Maynard, state chairman of the party, said, "Steve's wife is quite a prominent businesswoman, isn't she? Some furniture racket."

"Do they say she walked out on him?" asked Ben Talley, who could practically deliver the Eleventh District.

"No, he's living at the City Club. Been there some time."

"Maybe he doesn't like home cooking."

"Maybe he doesn't get any. Those businesswomen expect the men to do all that."

The Governor suggested, "Gentlemen, let's get down to business."

"Yes, sir," said Maynard. "Well, for my money, Ryland's far and away our best man. He's well liked in the legislature and he's a veteran with a good war record. Young — not too young, though — and he's come up through the organization."

"How about the labor vote?"

"He'd get part of it. More than anyone else we could put up, I think. He's known to have a progressive slant."

Talley said, "He's popular with the farmers because of his help in getting the dairy bills passed."

"I don't know," said Haines. "I'm not sure Ryland would stay in line."

"Well, Haines, who else is there?"

"Christofferson can't be overlooked," said Haines. "He has a lot of friends."

They had all known that name was in the mind of the city political boss, written in deeply with obligations.

"Anyone on the slate with Governor Elston is going to be nominated," Haines continued, "and Mr. Christofferson is a very loyal friend of the Governor."

Giles Maynard said, "Perhaps I might tell you gentlemen that Judge Amsley Hunt is very strong for Steve Ryland. The Judge carries a lot of weight in this state."

"If those stories happen to be true, the Judge wouldn't back him for a minute. The Judge is very strait-laced," said Haines.

Governor Elston broke it up. He said, on a note of conclusion, "Well, this doesn't have to be decided today. Suppose we all

consider it further. I'm sure we'll come to a happy agreement. I want to thank you very much for coming in."

BUT THE GOVERNOR took it up with his wife when he went home. "Marcia," he began abruptly, "what's going on that I don't know about?"

"Nothing important, I'm sure. Why do you ask me?"

"I understand that Steve Ryland isn't living at home."

"But everybody knows that, darling. You must have heard."

"I heard something but paid no attention. I thought it was just some little spat."

"I'm afraid it's worse than that. This seems to have been brewing for a long time. I couldn't be sorrier about the whole thing. Those poor boys. But I suppose they never had much home life."

"It's very serious for Steve. And embarrassing for me. I'd pretty nearly made up my mind that he should be on the slate for the nomination for governor. Now that he has made a fool of himself with domestic trouble, he might be more of a load than an asset. Haines is running around with the story. Of course he's Christofferson's man and this is duck soup for him."

"Poor Stephen — I hope nobody thinks it is his fault."

"They say he's been seen with some other woman. It isn't Lisa, is it?"

"Really, Hugh, I don't know anything about this. Except that Lisa naturally sees a good deal of Stephen. He's handling her legal affairs. And she likes him. I'm sure the poor fellow needs his friends now."

"But, my dear," he protested, "Lisa's your niece. It drags us into this business! We don't want to be connected with a public scandal. Maybe you ought to talk to Lisa, advise her to go back to Europe or something until this blows over."

"I'm sure it will blow over," said his wife serenely. "People have such short memories. Don't worry about Lisa, Hugh. You have too many important things on your mind to be troubled with gossip. I quite agree with you and I'll do exactly as you say. We'll be wise to ignore it. That's what you think, isn't it — what you want me to do?"

He said it was, feeling clarified and in full control of his household.

STEPHEN closed the car door and said, "Thanks for waiting, Lisa. I haven't been back to the office since early this morning and I thought there might be some mail or messages."

"Did you find any?"

"Nothing important." He started the car. "What would you like to do tonight?"

He tried to make his voice gay. But the fun had gone out of this routine of riding around the city, visiting restaurants and night clubs, choosing a movie, talking things over again on some hill where there was a view.

"Why not go back to the house?"

"It's always what I *want* to do. But I can't put you up against this all the time. I've been trying to think it out — I've about come to the conclusion — " He broke off.

"Aren't you going to finish?"

"I'll tell you when we get back to your house."

She could feel his grimness, and could guess what he planned to say to her. After a few minutes she spoke.

"I had a letter the other day from an old friend of mine. Fliss Savarin. I didn't know whether to tell you about it or not."

"Who's she?"

"She and I were in school together and then we used to hunt and go to horse shows in Carolina. This is one of those crazy coincidences that life cooks up every once in a while. She said she had met Kay at a party down there and heard from her that I was in Radisson. Of course she knew nothing about you and me. But she was very much interested in Kay."

"Why should she be?"

Lisa had not been quite sure whether the letter as written was an advantage or not. But a few twists might make it one. She went on, "She thought Kay was very attractive and said that one of the men she was with that night — staying with, I think she said — was obviously head over heels in love with her. I suppose it was that Peter Philemon. Isn't it strange how stories like that come

home to roost? Everybody knows everybody, that's why. It was evidently quite a party. Fliss said the hostess was completely drunk."

"What are you driving at, Lisa?"

"Well—people are human. Distance is distance and often considered safe. How do you know you may not have cause for divorce?"

Stephen turned sharply toward her and the car skidded. He swung it back into control. "Did that woman intimate such a thing?"

"Of course not. She only met Kay that night. I was afraid this would disturb you if I mentioned it. That's why I didn't. You have enough on your mind."

"I know Kay. If anything like that had gone on she would have come back and put her cards on the table."

"You weren't there when she came back, remember."

"No, that's right. But there's nothing to it, Lisa. I know how Kay feels about old Phil."

"I suppose you would," she said in a yes-or-no way.

They were back now in the neighborhood of the Wendell house. Stephen swung the car into its accustomed place and took Lisa's key to open the door.

"The old ark actually feels like home, doesn't it?" she asked as she raised her face to him.

After a minute he let her go, almost roughly. She knew that he was meeting the challenge of being alone with her again. After all these frustrating weeks he still met it with denial.

She led the way into the library as usual, kneeling to poke at the lumps of coal in the grate until the flames broke through. They lit the trouble in his face.

"Lisa, this is what I want to say. The way this thing is dragging along isn't fair to you. I think I ought to get out of your life entirely, not come here any more. There's probably been some talk about you and me. If I don't see you any more the assumption will be that you turned me down. No one will think any less of you. Or blame you. It's the only thing I can do," he summed up, more at ease now that he had said it.

"You mean you'd go back to Kay?"

"No — no — of course not! Feeling the way I do about you? It's the last thing in the world I'd do."

"What would you do?"

"Just go on, I suppose," he said. "Take it a day at a time. At least I wouldn't feel that I was making a mess of your life too. And if Kay sees reason and puts me in the clear — "

Lisa thought, you would go back to her. She would see to that. It wouldn't take long. She said, as if to herself, " I wanted so much to make you happy."

"You have, Lisa. In so many ways."

"None that count. She won't let me."

He bent to comfort her and she whispered, "Don't talk. Just hold me. We have this hour anyway. Don't think about anything."

CHAPTER 15

KAY HAD TO gear herself up to meet the boys' Christmas holidays. She had been nervous and almost sleepless before they came, figuring out ways and words to shield them from disappointment, shock and any sense of disgrace.

She tried to break it slowly to them. "No, your father couldn't come to the train. He isn't going to be home tonight."

And later, "It's too bad, but your father won't be home for Christmas."

Worst of all, trying to say coolly and pleasantly, "Look, boys, your father is staying at the club for a while and he'd like to have you lunch with him. Don't you think that would be fun?"

The lunch was her doing. She had felt so torn Christmas day that she had to do it. She had sent a brief note to Ralph Lamson saying that the boys were home for ten days and if Stephen wanted to see them she had no objection. The invitation to the club had been the result.

She realized that Mark and Colin hadn't been fooled. They knew their home was not normal. Yet they seemed to have a good time and their appetites were amazing. They were excited over hockey games and ski tournaments and their Christmas presents — Kay had splurged on those.

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Then at breakfast, on the day they were going back to school, Mark asked, "Are you and Dad getting a divorce?"

"No," answered Kay, "we aren't. I don't like divorces."

"But isn't he going to live in this house any more?"

"I don't know," said Kay. "I don't think so, Mark. He doesn't want to. But that is nothing to worry about. You see, your father has a different kind of work than mine. We are interested in different things. Different people."

"That's what he said to us," Colin said, "and we told him it was all right, that in our school quite a lot of our friends' fathers and mothers don't live together either."

Their innocence, their ignorance of the suffering, was a relief and a hurt.

But just before he left, Mark looked around and said, "I guess everything will be all right around here, won't it?"

"Why, of course."

Mark didn't want to leave the house. The separation hurt him. He was not so secure as he had been and was trying to reassure himself. Anger at Stephen for having done this to his younger child blazed up in Kay. This was his fault. But the echo came back, was there anything I could have done to prevent it?

She did not want to leave the house either. She had not turned on it because it had been the scene of failure and suffering. She kept on loving it, feeling its charm and seeing its beauty even when its empty rooms and broken habits tortured her.

EACH MONTH — there had been four of them now — a check from Stephen had come to her through Ralph Lamson's office. They lay in a drawer in her desk, unendorsed. She did not even acknowledge receipt of them. He would find out after a while that she would never use his money now that she did not live with him, that she would take care of herself.

Even when she could sleep now, she woke to fatigue. She lost weight. A pain in her head came and went, and she knew she should consult a doctor and find out if something was seriously wrong with her health. But she did not want to take time to be sick now, with the amount of business she was doing. She feared that

a doctor might try to hospitalize her, so she worked in spite of her headache.

She had hoped it might make her feel better to hear some music and told Davy Vail that she would like to come to his party. He had said that he had some new recordings, and was gathering a dozen or so people who might want to listen to them.

When the evening came, it was an effort for her to go and she had to force herself to do it. She had refused all other invitations since Stephen had left her and now very few came her way. She had no escort and her entire acquaintance was aware of it. Kay knew that she was dropping out of the place in the city which she had occupied as Stephen Ryland's wife and she made not the slightest effort to retain it.

But once at Davy's party, she felt better than she had in a long while. More relaxed and yet more spirited. There was no one among the guests whom she had ever met before. With these strangers, listening to the music and the talk, Kay found she could detach herself from the personal agonies of the last months.

This is the answer, she told herself. This is what I must do. I must make myself a new life out of whole cloth. Out of music and art and people who are interested in all the new things.

She was the last one to leave, lingering even after she had put on her coat. "I've had a wonderful time, Davy. I don't want to go home at all."

"Then don't. Why do you stay in that house anyway? Why don't you get rid of it?"

"Perhaps I shall, someday."

"I'd like to do a place that would be right for you," said Davy.

"That's an idea. What do you think I should have?"

He paced back and studied her. "You need space," he said. "You have a long step for a woman. There would be a sense of balance, but balance in motion, like a mobile; cool, profound colors — but nothing melancholy. And there'd be no feeling of schedule as in the house you're living in."

"What do you mean by schedule? How did it show?"

"It didn't show. I felt it."

"Oh — you did — "



"This would be different. More scope and less responsibility. It's the room of your own that you need, you see."

"But are you sure I'd enjoy living in this place you're imagining? Would I be happy?"

"If you didn't identify happiness with past experience."

She said slowly, "I suppose so. That's the hurdle. Well, Davy, it sounds wonderful. Sometime I might take you up on it. Just now the only place that seems right for me is the office."

"No office is right for a woman," said Davy in his pedantic way.

"That's a fine thing to say to your boss. And I know you don't really believe that. You're too much of a modern."

"Being modern has nothing to do with it. Of course I believe it."

"But women have to work in offices."

"One of our civilization's faults. And because their instinct is for drudgery, they remain drudges."

"Do you consider me a drudge?"

"I often wish you wouldn't let yourself be one."

She flared into anger. "What else can I do when the work piles up?"

"Give it to your slaves to do."

"Oh, Davy, it's my responsibility — "

"You're generous with everything except responsibility. You can't be both master and slave."

"I thought you liked working with me."

"I do. But I'm not so jealous of my status as most men."

Kay spoke to herself aloud. "It's incredible. I worked for years because I wanted to help a man and then he turned against me because a woman who worked so hard didn't fit into his life. And now a man who works with me turns on me and tells me that a woman shouldn't be a drudge. But both of them were willing to benefit from the work."

"Kay, I'm not turning on you. Working with you is great fun — it's exciting. Don't throw me out!"

"I can't afford to. I need you."

"Thank you for telling me."

"Why should I have to tell you?" she asked impatiently.

"Forgive me. I've spoiled your evening."

"I should have gone when I started. No — maybe not. I'll see you on Monday."

Half an hour later Kay opened the door of her own house thinking — a scheduled feeling — a drudge — I suppose Steve felt that way. The pain in her head began again.

CHAPTER 16

RALPH LAMSON was having lunch with Stephen. For a few minutes after they met they delayed bringing up the problem, wishing it didn't have to be discussed.

"It's become an impossible situation, Ralph," Stephen said finally. "I've got to move in some direction."

"Have there been any political repercussions?"

"I don't know. There's been no real chance for them to begin. Not until or unless I file for office."

"You plan to file?"

"I'll have to be sure where I stand with the Governor first. If he runs for Senator — and he's going to, of course — he'll be choosing his running mates for the state offices. But he hasn't said anything definite to me, one way or the other. Lisa's connection with his wife is one more complication. She's at the Mansion often."

"That should be a break for you."

"Or the other way around. It's certainly another reason for settling this business."

"I can see that."

"There must be some angle we haven't considered."

"I wish I knew of one. But unless you establish residence in some other state where the divorce laws are more lax — and that's political suicide for you — I don't see what's been overlooked."

"I won't put up with it any longer," said Stephen grimly. His manner had changed in four months. The ease, the look of being master of his time and actions, had changed. His body was as taut as Lamson's was relaxed. He ground out his cigarette and said, "Let's get down to brass tacks, Ralph. What did Kay say when you saw her yesterday?"

"She doesn't intend to sue for a divorce. She said that while she could take — that was her word — being deserted, for her to divorce you was impossible. She seems extraordinarily sensitive about the permanent values of the married state."

"Anything else?"

"Only this. As I was leaving she asked, 'Can't Steve get the divorce if he wants it so much? I worked too hard for my marriage to destroy it. Let him be the killer.' " He quoted the words, with their unhappy content, unemotionally.

Stephen's voice became just as even. "That's right. She did work hard for her marriage. And she kept it her marriage. She ran the show and paid for most of it. Well, at least I know where I stand. I suppose it means leaving the state. I can't put Lisa up against this indefinitely. It's too hard on her. She didn't expect to get into anything like this."

"She did it before. She had a long tussle to get Jeff Bowes."

"I don't like the way you put that," said Stephen. "She went through hell with Bowes."



"I guess there's no doubt about that. But he was a very brilliant fellow before she married him."

"You can't blame her because he drank himself to death."

"But why did he?" asked Ralph.

"Why does anybody crack up?"

"Often because he's lost the thing or the person that stabilizes him. Bowes pushed through a divorce in France. His wife didn't let him go until she had to. Someone told me she always waited for Jeff to come back to her, and believed he wanted to come."

"What's the significance of that? Are you suggesting that I might crack up?"

Lamson said, evasively for him, "I'm seriously concerned over this suggestion that you might leave the state. You'd be a better governor than Hugh Elston, by a long shot."

"I can't go through a campaign as things are. I could if I had only myself to consider. But they would drag Lisa into it."

"I suppose it will mean Christofferson, if you don't file."

"Yes, worse luck."

They began to talk politics now, keeping the conversation impersonal. The waiter brought pie and coffee and finally took the plates away.

"I haven't been much help to you, Steve."

"You've done all you could," said Stephen. "I'm very grateful."

"There's no reason to be. I'm the one who is in your debt. This has given me a chance to know Katherine better. It's been a reassuring, an exhilarating experience."

Stephen glanced at his friend in a startled way. Can Ralph have fallen for Kay, he asked himself.

Unsatisfactory bits and pieces of his conversation with Lamson kept turning over in his mind even after he was back in his office. At length he forced himself to concentrate on the legal papers before him. He was still involved with them when the newsboy brought in an evening paper and he realized it was after five o'clock. He glanced at the headlines, scanned the other front-page items casually. Then he said aloud, "For God's sake!"

There were just a few paragraphs:

Hotel Man Dies

Peter Philemon, president of Philemon Hotels, Incorporated, which includes the locally managed Mount Royal Hotel, died of a heart attack yesterday in North Carolina. Considered one of the most enterprising hotel men in the country, Mr. Philemon was . . .

Stephen saw the vigorous, stocky, friendly man as he read the summary of him. Saw him standing in Kay's office in the custom-made clothes that always seemed to overexhibit what they were, holding forth in exclamations about the new property he'd acquired and the money it would bring in. But Philemon had been a kind of dreamer too, thought Stephen. Pusher, but you didn't mind that because he was so honest. This will certainly hit Kay hard. He was the best friend she had. It's one wallop after another for Kay right now.

Stephen reached for the telephone and dialed a number. No answer. Evidently she didn't work as late as she used to. He dialed

another, equally familiar, and heard, "Mr. Ryland's residence."

The statement gave him a sudden shock. It took him a few seconds to recover.

"Is Mrs. Ryland there? . . . Oh, she isn't? . . . Well, Ida, it's good to hear your voice. Are you completely well again? . . . I'm glad to hear that. Do you know where I can reach Mrs. Ryland? . . . Carolina, did she? Then she knows about it, that's why I called. When did she leave? . . . Yes, I've read about it . . . you're right, he was a fine gentleman . . . it's very sad. . . . Well, thank you . . . good-bye, Ida. Take care of yourself."

CHAPTER 17

LISA and her aunt were talking in Mrs. Elston's sitting room, after the annual reception at the Mansion for the wives of the Governor's political associates.

"It was the most tremendous success," said Lisa, "and now all the pretty pink tea cakes will turn into fat bundles of votes. But you must be nearly dead."

She herself was not in the least tired. She felt the exhilaration of personal triumph. Ostensibly, she had been merely helping her aunt receive, but there had been a better reason than that for using her charm this afternoon. She had given it to these women to take home with them, where it would keep on working for Steve and herself.

"I suppose that at the peak there was a ton of rhinestones in this house this afternoon," she remarked. "Who was the woman wearing the flying saucer plastered with them?"

"She wants to be the wife of the next governor," said Marcia Elston. "Her name is Christofferson."

"Oh, please don't let that happen!"

"You can do more about that than I can," answered her aunt. "Won't you stay for dinner, dear?"

"I'm afraid I can't tonight. Steve is picking me up at seven."

"Wouldn't you both like to stay?"

Lisa, quickly deciding against such an evening, said, "I don't think we should. This is the Mansion, Marcia darling. Steve and

I can't dine here *en famille* yet. But I suppose Steve will want to come in and say hello to Uncle Hugh. He's so devoted to him."

"Hugh thinks very highly of Stephen."

"I hope so. Steve needs his friends especially now. I do wish that Uncle Hugh would give him a little encouragement. If he could count on the Governor's backing, it would make all the difference in the world to him. He's very sensitive about his personal situation. As if it were his fault and not due to that woman's utter malice! Steve has even talked to me about leaving Radisson. For good."

"But that would be dreadfully foolish! Would you want that, Lisa?"

"I think it would be worse than dreadful."

"How do things stand now? Is the divorce well under way?"

"I never mention it to him," lied Lisa, "but I know Steve is seeing his lawyer today."

"Is his wife being difficult?"

"I think so. She's probably asking for a lot of money."

"But Katherine Ryland must make a great deal!"

"Women like that think of nothing but money. Personally I don't see why he owes her anything. But he's very chivalrous about the whole thing, and has been ever since she drove him out of his house."

"Hugh has always said Stephen is a very loyal person."

"He certainly is to the Governor. I don't know what Steve would do if you and Uncle Hugh turned against him because of this trouble. I hope you've told the Governor that none of this is Steve's fault."

"I have told him that. Perhaps I'd better run down and have a word with him before Stephen comes. This might be a chance for them to have a nice little visit."

"You *are* an angel!"

Mrs. Elston found her husband in the dining room. He was eating a piece of heavily frosted cake which he had taken from a silver tray on the sideboard, and looked guilty as he mumbled, "There you are. I've been looking for you. I didn't have any lunch to speak of. Did your party go off all right?"

"Yes, it went very well. Lisa was a great help."

"I saw she was surrounded. Looking very pretty. Better keep her for dinner."

"I can't persuade her to stay. Stephen Ryland is calling for her in a few minutes."

"Just as well not to ask him."

"I know. But, Hugh, when Stephen comes in, wouldn't this be a good time to have a word with him?"

"A word about what? Not about Lisa. You know I told you not to mix in that. You promised me. Let them work it out."

"Of course not about Lisa. But from something she let drop, I think Stephen is worried about how he stands with you."

"He should be. He's put me in quite a spot."

"But, Hugh, you *are* going to back him, aren't you? Isn't he still the best person?"

"I thought so. I'd picked the boy out, built him up, but there's no getting around it, Marcia, Ryland's in a ticklish position. He must straighten out his private affairs or he'd be a political liability."

"They'll be all straightened out soon. His lawyer is doing that. And it would be different if people thought he was the one to blame. But from what I hear there is very little sympathy for his wife — almost everyone has dropped her. I didn't even send her a card today. It would have been difficult if she had come, with Lisa helping me.

"There's Stephen now." She broke off and went to meet him. "Come in, Stephen, I'm so glad to see you. How are the boys?"

Stephen said they were fine, that he hadn't seen them since Christmas time. He hoped he wasn't intruding but Lisa had told him that he might pick her up here.

Mrs. Elston answered pleasantly, "Yes, she's expecting you. I'll go up and tell her you are here, Stephen. You and the Governor can visit while she's getting ready."

The Governor had shaken hands with Steve. Now he took a pose which he had sought to immortalize in an oil painting hanging in the capitol. "Have a chair, Steve. How about a drink?"

"No, thank you, sir, I'll be having one later. The Mansion looks very fine tonight, all lit up."

"Yes, it's comfortable. I get a little lonesome when I look around here now," said the Governor. "But apparently I'm hooked, Steve. You told me last spring that I'd be drafted when Senator Ferebee retired, and that's what's happened."

"It's an even bigger job in Washington, sir."

"That's all right. What worries me is this one. As you must know, Steve, there's been considerable talk about you as the person to carry the ball. A good many of the boys think you've got the stuff to make a governor. Of course you lack executive experience, but you've had some training in the legislature. I'm inclined to think you might be able to handle it."

"There's no job I'd rather try to handle," said Stephen. "But there's a bad catch. My personal life is pretty well crossed up right now."

"I've heard something about that. Most unfortunate."

"It's not that I'm afraid of any criticism that would come my way. But I wouldn't want to involve anyone else."

"Certainly not. Very commendable."

"So I'm in a bad spot."

"Well, you don't want to take all this too seriously. Not that it isn't serious. But the public is more realistic than it used to be. Of course it depends on circumstances, who's at fault. In your case—from the little I hear, and I never listen to these things—there seems to be a feeling that you're not too much to blame. I understand that you did your best to carry on as long as you could. You might even get some sympathy, you rascal."

"That I can do without," said Stephen.

"Quite right. We all have to paddle our own canoes. However, everyone feels that a man needs some home life."

It took a moment for the implication to sink in. Then Stephen said, "If you're speaking of me, Governor Elston, I had a very adequate home life."

The Governor looked nonplused. "That may be the right attitude," he said at length. "Better if it doesn't come from you. Let your friends stick up for you. And they will. The word gets around. Especially when the women get started. They'll do better than whitewash you."

"I wouldn't stand for any campaign built on criticism of Kay, Governor. I couldn't allow her to be smeared," Stephen said sharply.

"Smeared?" repeated the Governor, as if he had never heard of the word.

"I know how those word-of-mouth things are done. And how far they carry. But that would be outrageous in this case. Whatever blame attaches to the breakup of our marriage should fall on me."

The Governor looked at Stephen's taut face and said, "However that may be, the thing is to get your personal affairs cleared up, and to do it as quickly as possible. A fact doesn't bother people so much as a rumor."

"I quite realize that, but—"

"Here are the ladies," said the Governor, seeing them on the stair landing. "We won't discuss this in front of them. Drop in to see me in the next few days."

"Are we interrupting a very serious conversation?" asked Mrs. Elston.

"Let's do it anyway," said Lisa, and kissed the Governor on the top of his head. "Hello, Steve."

She did not have to kiss him. Her possession was evident in even that light greeting. Instantly Lisa knew it hadn't gone well. Something was wrong. Stephen could hardly smile.

He was assuring himself that he was in love with her. He *must* be in love with her—she was all he had in the world now. But suddenly Stephen knew he didn't trust her, and that things were going on around him which concerned him and yet were not under his control. They were hammering at him to get a divorce—the Governor and Lisa too—but he couldn't do it. He must get Lisa out of here and tell her how things stood.

The Governor was saying, "I understand you girls put on quite a show this afternoon."

"Lisa was the one who made the party a success, Hugh. She has a gift for making people enjoy themselves."

"I know someone else with that gift, and it's lucky for her husband," said the Governor.

"Lisa would make a much better governor's wife than I do," Mrs. Elston said, smiling at Stephen with definite meaning.

He said to himself, why they're almost coming out with it in so many words. They want us here. They've figured it all out. I'm to marry Lisa and step into Elston's shoes and it's all kept in the family. They're building Lisa up for it . . . they're tearing Kay down. But this isn't going to get anywhere. For Kay won't divorce me. Shall I say so right now and have it out?

"Hadn't we better go along, Steve?" asked Lisa, seeing danger in his unsmiling face.

"Take good care of our girl, Steve," Mrs. Elston charged him confidingly as they left the Mansion.

"WHERE are we going?" inquired Lisa, because he hadn't asked what she wanted to do and they were approaching the city.

"The club, I thought. I'll get one of the small dining rooms on the ladies' side, where we can be alone."

"Let's go back to my house. Signe can fix us something."

"No, I want to talk on my own ground tonight."

"What's the matter, Steve? You're being almost rude."

"I'm sorry," he said quickly. "I don't mean to be."

The little dining room was not quite small enough, and too bright for secrets. Lisa said, "What a silly place to be."

"It's the only place I have that's off the street."

"It won't be the only place much longer."

"That's what we must talk about, Lisa."

"Let's settle for the Mansion for a few years," she said. "I begin to think I'd have fun. I could gather in more amusing people than they do."

"That's out the window, I'm afraid, Lisa."

"Of course it isn't. What did the Governor say to you tonight?"

"What makes you think he said anything of importance?"

"You were talking to him."

Stephen said slowly, "There was a setup tonight at the Mansion, though I didn't catch on at once. I think you know already what Elston said to me. He put it on the line. If I can get a divorce quickly and without a lot of publicity — and if you and I are married, though he didn't say that in so many words — he'll put me on the slate and back me for governor."

"So he came right out with it! Marcia's really a dear."

"There are two reasons why it won't work. For one thing, the idea seemed to be to pass the word around that I've been neglected for years and had no home life and that Kay's to blame for everything. I wouldn't allow anything like that. And the second reason is that Kay refuses to get a divorce."

"Is that what Ralph Lamson told you today?"

"That's the story."

"Oh, I'm sick of him! He's no good at all."

"He's the best there is."

"I think he's playing her game. If she wants money, we'll have to dig it up. But it will have to be a settlement once and for all. Don't let yourself in for years of extortion."

He said, "Kay's never mentioned money. She won't even cash the checks I sent her."

"That's an old act. Perhaps they aren't big enough."

"Lisa, you don't understand what Kay is like."

"I wonder if you do. And I don't understand all this chivalry about having no one say a word about your happy marriage. You walked out of it! People will explain it to suit themselves. They always do."

"I've seen explanations planted. I'm not hiding behind Kay's skirts that way. She did the best she could."

"She's not doing it now. There must be some way to make her get a divorce. Don't you think you've babied her and pussyfooted long enough? What you need is one of these sharp, not so high-minded lawyers to throw a scare into that woman. You could ruin her in this town! Send her an ultimatum that you're going to take her children away from her, that you're going to show up her trips around the country and that you'll name that hotel man as corespondent—"

"Lisa—stop—don't go any further. Peter Philemon is dead."

"Dead?"

"Only yesterday. He had a heart attack."

"Oh, what miserable luck! I was sure we could use him if we had to!"

"Use him!"

CHAPTER 18

DURING the next few days he did not see her, but he telephoned her often, though the talk was repetitive and came to nothing. She did not ask him to come to her, and he hardly wanted to go, except in surges of loneliness and yearning. He knew that she was testing him, waiting to see what he would do. And although he was restless, he wanted it that way. He had hardly left her at her door after the unfortunate dinner at the club that night before excuses for her and accusations of himself began to torment him. When next he saw her he wanted to bring her a decision and a plan. This was impossible until he had talked to the Governor, who had flown to Washington to see Ferebee.

Once during that week Lisa had to come to his office, to sign some papers. She did what Stephen asked, with no questions, only looking up as she briefly scanned one document to say with a protesting smile, "How I hate that word widow they use to describe me here!"

"With you it's only a legal and temporary description."

"Make it so, will you, Steve?"

"I promise. Give me a little time, Lisa, and I'll have a plan."

The Governor returned to the city the next morning, and Stephen had an appointment with him at four o'clock, not in the Mansion but in the executive office at the capitol. When he came out, Stephen looked very tired. He straightened his shoulders, lit another cigarette and walked down the marble corridor, glancing up now and then at a statue or a painting as if he had never seen it before. Or might not again.

He telephoned Lisa and then ate cheaply at a cafeteria because his bill at the club was running up. It was nine o'clock when he arrived at her house. Signe and Berne had gone to their apartment in the garage, and she let him in herself. They settled in their usual places in the library, but tonight he felt on guard. He didn't know how she would take what he must tell her.

"Not yet," he said when she offered him a drink.

"You look tired."

"A long day, that's all."

"And being alone."

"That won't last forever."

"It's lasted much too long already. Steve, do you want a divorce or don't you?"

Did he? Was he glad Kay had resisted? Lisa's sudden question exposed feelings that he would not examine or acknowledge. He covered them with his reply. "It's under way finally. I saw the Governor today and put my cards on the table."

"What idiotic thing have you done now!" she exclaimed. "What did you say to him?"

"I told him the truth. That Kay would not divorce me and that I had no cause to divorce her in this state. That if I filed now I'd be a married man separated from his wife, and that, even if I weathered that, your name might be dragged into the fight. So I told him I was going to leave Radisson and establish a residence in a state where I could get a quick divorce on technical grounds."

"Oh, what an idiot you can be — what did he say?"

"What could he say? He didn't like it. He'd figured that Kay would divorce me and that I could be made into some sort of lousy hero for letting her do it. But he doesn't want to be tied up with an anomalous situation — and you're his wife's niece."

"Do you dream I'd go with you on this pilgrimage you plan?"

"Of course not."

"Then what would I do?"

"You've business here that should keep you for a while. And as soon as I humanly can I'll set things up so I can take care of you, and ask you to come to me."

He said it quietly, without expression. He knew it didn't sound as it should, even before she mocked him, "What an alluring proposition!"

"I wish it were more so, Lisa."

"You've thrown away your whole future. What do you think you have to offer?"

"I'd have to start with myself."

"But you'd count on me to bring you everything I have. You know just what there is, too. You've looked into the estate — "

"Better quit, Lisa. Don't go too far. There are things no man has to take. I see now what a fool I was. It wasn't me you wanted. It was the man who might be governor."

"Who could have been so much more than that too, if—"

"You don't want a husband. You want a man to manipulate. I suppose that was the reason you wanted Bowes too. He looked like a brilliant career."

"I loved him! And he loved me! He was worth two of you!"

"Then why did you drive him to suicide?"

He wanted to hurt her. But he hadn't expected such a cry of fury and pain as she screamed that he lied, and flung her glass at his face.

AFTER he left the house, Lisa still felt herself trembling. It was anger. It was memory too. It was because someone had said it at last, in so many words. She walked about the house, flicking on lights in rooms she hardly ever entered, trying to fix her interest on something, afraid to go to bed. She drank carelessly and steadily, and finally the liquor took hold and she fell asleep. Toward dawn, she woke now and then, wishing Signe would come with the coffee that was always brought to her at nine. But no one came, and the last time she woke it was eleven o'clock. The silence and emptiness of the house were ominous. She dressed and went to the kitchen. There was no one there.

There was not so much as a note. The rooms over the garage were quite empty. They must have moved out most of their belongings on some previous day and slipped away with the final things last night.

Returning to the house, she shivered, thinking, I can't stay here now. Not another night. She had been a fool to come back here, and to get involved with Stephen Ryland in the first place. She thought, he'll call. He'll come crawling back. But then, as she remembered the things that had been said and done, she knew he would not telephone. She found herself hating not Stephen but her real adversary, the woman who hadn't let him go.

She planned quickly and definitely, as she had planned this return to Radisson. She would go to New York. Or to Washington,

where she knew so many people? No, not alone. To Palm Beach? Not without a man. Better go to Paris from New York.

She called the railway ticket office. "A compartment through to New York. Yes, single occupancy. Eight o'clock tonight? I'll pick up the ticket at the station."

She took the clothes she needed immediately and left the rest. Her aunt could send on anything she wanted. They'd have to put a caretaker in the house. Who would do that? Stephen Ryland, in charge of her estate. She thought, I won't have that. She went to her desk and wrote to Mr. Jelke.

> . . . and since I am forced to go to New York unexpectedly and do not know when I can return, I leave everything in your hands and those of Mr. Reid. I have had to let the servants who were acting as caretakers go, but in the interim before the house is sold, someone surely can be found to look after it. I have felt for some time that Mr. Ryland has not been able to give the estate full attention and shall be so grateful if one of my father's old friends, you or Mr. Reid, can look after my affairs. . . .

She posted the letter on her way to the Mansion to see her aunt. For the visit, Lisa wore a soft yellow suit and scarf under chestnut-colored fur, and the effect was so lovely that no one could have connected such a beautiful woman with failure or unhappiness.

"I know it seems sudden, Marcia," she said. "It *is* sudden. But it's impossible to stay there without Signe and Berne — and they weren't much good anyway. Berne had a bad heart."

"But how does Stephen feel about this?"

"Stephen is the reason, Marcia. He and I talked everything over last night and I finally made him see my point of view. He cannot persuade his wife to divorce him. He talked vaguely about going away somewhere else to get one, but I couldn't seem to make him come to a decision. In the end it had to be mine. I must not go on seeing Stephen."

"He must be heartbroken."

"I learned a great deal about Steve last night," said Lisa rather sadly. "Marcia, I want a man who will take care of me, a man

with real courage — perhaps it's all for the best. Of course the Governor couldn't back Steve."

"That's what Hugh told me last night. He's very much disappointed in Stephen Ryland, and so am I."

"Imagine how I feel — I tried to be his friend. I could have cared so much."

Lisa had accomplished her purpose. No one would ever know what had happened. It would be his failure.

That evening, as the taxi driver lugged her bags down the stairs, she turned for a last look before she closed the door. Never again, she thought, saying good-bye to the hope of a little girl who had yearned for a home that was right and safe, for the shelter of a permanent relationship. She went back through the hall, stooped and turned on the fountain. The water spouted about the bronze boy, and she left it running as she went out to the taxi. There was a light burning upstairs. The house was not quite dead.

From the taxi window she watched until the cab turned the corner. For a dark moment she let her suffering loose, let it swirl around her. I don't want to go. I don't belong anywhere else. It was her childhood loneliness and fear, worse than ever before.

But late that night, when the train was far from Radisson, a crack of light still shone under the door of Compartment A, where Lisa lay in bed. Her head was propped against three pillows, and she looked quite interested in the book she had bought in the station.

CHAPTER 19

"EVERYTHING all right, Ida?" Kay asked, entering the house and telling herself that it was always going to feel as bleak as this when she came back, and she might as well get used to it. "No catastrophes? Any calls I should bother about?"

"Mr. Ryland called."

"He did?"

"Yes, the same day you left. He wanted to know where he could reach you. I said you'd gone to Carolina because of Mr. Philemon's death. He'd heard of it and that was why he called."

"I see. Thanks, Ida."

The immediate thing was to go to the office and check on how affairs were going there. She had stayed away more than a week, trying to stabilize herself; thinking of Phil and of Steve, and of her own failure to satisfy the love which each of them had offered her.

To her surprise, she found Janice at her old desk in the display room.

"But Janice, what are you up to? You shouldn't be back here yet. Why — it's just two months since the baby was born. This *is too soon.*"

"The doctor says it's all right. I'm in fine shape. Do you mind my coming back?"

"Of course not, unless this is going to be too much for you. How about the baby?"

"She's too young to miss me, and I have a good woman to look after her."

"Is it all right with Joe?"

"Well, Joe would never say so, but he knows it will certainly help a lot. He has his hands full."

Davy Vail's greeting was casual to the point of indifference, but Kay could feel his perceptions around her, testing her mood.

He was acid in his comments on the taste of some new clients. This was what they should have in their houses — but that degraded stuff was what they would probably choose. Davy told Kay she should do something about it at once.

"Why don't you do it yourself, Davy? If you're so sure that you're right, you should be able to sell the idea."

"They won't listen to me."

"That's your problem," said Kay. She added casually, "After all, I can't be master and slave. Quote. Who said that?"

"All right, but we may lose the contract."

"We can't afford to," said Kay cheerfully.

There was a message from a client named Olive Overton that she could not decide which of the Chinese papers to use on the screen in the dining room and wanted Kay to come and look at them in the house. So Kay did that at the end of the day, on her

way home. A maid let her in and told her that Mrs. Overton was on the telephone. As she waited, Kay spent a few minutes inspecting with pleasure the colors and fabrics she had chosen for this house. She could hear Olive Overton's high, imperative voice going on and on, and suddenly she heard the one name that was like a dagger.

"Lisa's always been unpredictable. Mrs. Elston says that she was called to New York very suddenly and will probably go to Paris from there. . . . Of course there's more to it than meets the eye; everyone thought she was going to marry him. . . . Nobody knows what happened but she probably got fed up and this town's pretty small for our Lisa. . . . Did you hear about the mess? She left the fountain on in the hall when she went away. The servants had left, so the furnace went out and the pipes burst and the water froze in the hall. Well, anyway, she's not coming back. . . . No, he's here. . . . Of course, he might be going to follow her, but from the way her aunt spoke . . . she was kind of running Steve Ryland down, so it may be all over. . . ."

Quickly and quietly Kay opened the front door. She could not face Mrs. Overton now.

She thought, as she approached her own home, what if Steve should be here? If it was hope she felt, there was dread with it. But of course he was not there. She went about her evening routine, telling herself that she had happened to hear some confused gossip, and that probably not a word of it was true.

If Steve was not with Lisa, where was he? What was he doing? What was he planning? The questions roamed her mind impatiently, and she turned on the radio in her bedroom to drown out her thoughts. The news of a world in struggle and debate poured out, and she tried to shrink her own trouble by concentration on the great ones. Then came the regional news, and in his first sentence the commentator spoke directly to Kay.

"The race for governor remains wide open, but Stephen Ryland no longer has the inside track, if what was heard around the capitol today is accurate. Whatever the cause of the breach between the popular Speaker of the House and the incumbent Governor, it appears that there is one. That the Governor's nod will be

almost equivalent to a nomination for his successor is taken for granted in political circles. The report from inner sources is that Hugh Elston's blessing definitely will go to Phil Christofferson, who has been casting sheep's eyes at the governorship for a long time.

"Ryland, to whom this reporter talked today, was close-mouthed on . . ."

She has ruined him, thought Kay. Or did I do it?

CHAPTER 20

JUDGE AMSLEY HUNT came into his chambers and held out his hand to the visitor he had summoned. "How are you, Mr. Ryland? I'm glad to see you."

"I'm very well, Judge Hunt."

"I sent for you because I would like you to tell me, if you will, your opinion of Philip Christofferson."

"I think he is a rascal and a fraud," said Stephen. "He is a shrewd operator who has made a great deal of money and he now spends a very small part of it on worthy causes, trying to sweeten himself up with the public. But he hasn't cut loose from his old interests and he never will."

"You do not think him a fit person to be governor of this state?"

"No, Judge Hunt, I don't."

"My opinion tallies with yours," said the Judge. "My next question is, why does Hugh Elston choose to support him? Or, more directly, why doesn't Elston back you?"

"Well, since you've done me the honor of asking me so frankly, one answer is that I've no money. Christofferson has plenty."

"I'm sure that fact would be influential with the Governor," said Judge Hunt politely. "But you weren't a rich man six months ago and at that time Elston talked about you as his most probable successor."

"My personal situation was different then. The Governor feels that as matters stand now I'd be a liability to his ticket. You know perhaps that my wife and I aren't living together."

"I have heard so. With the utmost dismay. I have a great

affection for your wife. Is there any other reason why Elston has soured on you?"

Stephen hesitated. He said finally, "Yes, there is. But it's a private matter of which I don't feel free to speak."

"I withdraw the question."

"Thank you, sir."

"I can't stomach Christofferson," said the Judge. "I've seen the results of his encouragement and tolerance of evil too often in my courtroom. I can't in conscience keep out of this business. I think, Stephen, that you should file for that nomination."

It was the first time he had used Stephen's given name, and the friendly gesture was deliberate and warming.

Stephen didn't speak for a minute. This was completely unexpected. He had been braced for a denunciation of his conduct toward Kay. He felt moved and honored. Judge Amsley Hunt's practice was to let candidates come to him, to ask his help.

"I'm afraid I wouldn't get very far, sir," said Stephen slowly.

"Why not? There are a great many good people in this state who don't like the idea of gamblers and panderers taking over their government. The first thing, of course, is for you and Katherine to get together, to present a united front. She'd take you back, wouldn't she?"

"I don't know."

"Maybe you'd better find out," said the Judge. "I'd be optimistic. Katherine is a woman of generous temperament. Also she'd understand the situation."

"But I can't—I would never ask Kay to take me back so I could become governor."

"You wouldn't have to put it just that way," said the Judge.

"That's about what it would amount to. Let me say one thing, Judge Hunt. I'm not sure I can make it clear, but I'd like you to know this. I went off the deep end. I was a fool and worse. But it wasn't just that I wanted another woman. I had an idea that our life, Kay's and mine, wasn't balanced right, that I could be of more use to someone else than I was to Kay. I ended up being no use to anyone, and there it is."

"I believed you were an honest young man. I'm glad to be

further convinced of it. So you don't feel you can discuss this with Katherine?"

"I'm afraid of it. Kay's getting on all right without me. I've caused her enough pain. I don't want to risk doing it again."

"Would you like me to talk to her in your behalf?"

Stephen swung forward in his chair, quickly tense. "I must ask you not to consider such a thing, Judge Hunt."

"Not even if the alternative is Christofferson?"

"I won't let Kay's feelings be used as pawns in that game." Stephen stood up. "I'm sorry I can't be of any use in this, more sorry than I can say."

"Not so fast. Sit down." Stephen obeyed. "You make the battle harder, Stephen, but I called you here today to offer you my support if you would file for this nomination. The offer holds."

Stephen found that he had to mop his forehead. In another minute it might have been his eyes.

"I can't tell you how much this means to me, Judge Hunt. To have your support is the finest thing that has ever happened to me in public life. Believe me, I'm going to put up a fight for that nomination from one end of this state to the other."

"Fine. I think we can get together a strong volunteer committee for you. I have some friends who have a little money. Many more who have none. You have a large personal following. We can build up enough support to let those rascals know they're in a battle."

"I'm finding words difficult, sir."

"Don't let that be true in your campaign. But one more question before you go. You say Katherine is getting on all right? You know that to be true?"

"My lawyer told me so. He has great admiration for Kay."

"She always excites that. I remember her in this court, a little waif who had run away from the home of an aunt who did not like her. Pride and courage sticking out of her, determined to make her way through school and then college — "

"That was when I knew her first."

"Yes, she told me. I never knew a girl who wanted to bring more to a marriage. It wasn't what she could get — "

"You're punishing me, sir."

"It's my duty to administer justice," said the Judge dryly. "I've no doubt that Katherine's been punished too."

"She shouldn't have been."

"Oh, she has her faults. Katherine isn't tolerant of less industrious women than herself. She couldn't forgive that little Daphne I sent her for not wanting to do her share." He laughed. "The girl was a thorn in Katherine's flesh. But Katherine's generosity and energy probably deprive others of opportunity. Nonetheless, she is a valiant woman."

"Valiant — that's a good word for her."

"Did you ever read Proverbs, Chapter 31?"

"If I ever did, I don't remember it."

"I quoted some of it to Katherine when I saw her last. I told her to read it. I doubt if she ever did. She's a very busy person. The woman in Proverbs was busy too. It's quite an accurate description of your wife, Stephen. Better read it yourself."

"I shall. Did you say 31?"

"That's right," said the Judge. "Well, good luck to you, Stephen. And when the newspaper boys show up today, I'm going to tell them you're my candidate for governor. Don't fail me."

STEPHEN no longer lived at his club. He had moved to a small hotel which cost him less. It was late afternoon when he left Judge Hunt's chambers, feeling both cleansed and exhilarated, and he went back to his office instead of to his dreary lodgings. He knew the full value of the Judge's support. It would make a sensation among the politicians. It would astonish the Governor and certainly worry him. And I know the issues I can fight on, Stephen said to himself. But the talk with the Judge had done more than give him political hope. He had at last been able to speak of Kay to someone, to loose not only the blame of himself but the puzzle that possessed him, and Judge Hunt had seemed to know what he was talking about.

In his office he flung down his papers on the desk, still thinking of her. What chapter had the Judge said described Kay? Proverbs, wasn't it — 31 — there must be a Bible in the law library.

He found several versions and picked up the first one, looking for the place, and, as he read, the description seemed living and unmistakable.

Who shall find a valiant woman? The price of her is as of things from afar, and from the uttermost coasts. The heart of her husband trusteth in her and he shall have no need of spoils. She will render him good and not evil all the days of her life. She hath sought wool and flax and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands; she is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar.

Those trips Kay would take — off to Europe — off to Carolina — bringing her bread from afar, that's about right, thought Stephen, and he read on.

And she hath risen in the night and given prey to her household and victuals to her maidens; she hath considered a field and bought it. Stephen smiled at that. . . . *She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow; for all her domestics are clothed with double garments. . . . She hath made for herself clothing of tapestry; fine linen and purple is her covering. Her husband is honorable in the gates when he sitteth among the senators of the land.*

At that Stephen closed the Bible and walked up and down the room. The Judge knew how to put the knife in, all right. Honorable in the gates.

But he went back to finish it.

She made fine linen and sold it and delivered a girdle to the Chanaanite. Strength and beauty are the clothing; and she shall laugh in the latter day. She hath opened her mouth to wisdom and the law of clemency is on her tongue; she hath looked well to the paths of her house and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up and called her blessed; her husband also and he praised her. . . . Favor is deceitful and beauty vain; the woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands. And let her works praise her in the gates.

It's Kay to the life, thought Stephen — Kay selling her stuff, looking after her house and the people who work for her. Children in the picture too — and the husband, who's in it all the way

through. As he ought to be. Trusting her—I always did that anyway. I always knew I could.

CHAPTER 21

STEPHEN had felt criticism and disapproval around him in his firm ever since that morning when Mr. Jelke had told him that Mrs. Bowes had suggested he might be too busy to handle her affairs.

"I'll be glad to be relieved of them," Stephen had said. "I think they are in such shape that they can be turned over to you at once, Mr. Jelke. I'll take care of that today."

When the announcement that he had filed for the nomination for governor appeared in the papers one day in late March, no one of his three senior partners seemed to have noticed it. Ralph Lamson was the only one in the office who spoke of the fact.

"I see your hat's in the ring, Steve. I certainly wish you luck. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Not right now, I think. Keep your fingers crossed. We're forming a committee."

"If you want me to see anybody in your behalf, I'll do it, Steve."

It was obvious that he meant Kay. Stephen answered without looking up. "There is no need to press that matter now. It's entirely in Kay's hands to do what she wants and when."

"At one time, you know, she was open to reconciliation. And that's very important for you now, if you're in this fight. If your personal situation—and other commitments—have changed—"

Stephen said, "The situation remains that Kay has plenty of cause if she wants to divorce me. I'd have none in seeking reconciliation. But thanks for offering."

It was after the volunteer committee for Stephen Ryland for governor had been announced that Mr. Jelke sent for Stephen. He did not mention that. He said only that there was a small matter concerning the Wendell estate that he wanted to discuss.

"Among the minor bequests were two to former servants, Berne and Signe Anderson. Now the man has died."

"I had not heard that. I'm very sorry. He was a good man."

"His wife telephoned the office about it and was referred to me. She was extremely resentful because their legacies hadn't been paid. It was rather pitiful because she had wanted the money to take her husband back to his old home in Sweden where he wanted to die."

"I know. They both talked to me about it."

"You could have given them the money easily enough. There's plenty of cash and partial distribution is always allowable in a case like that."

But Lisa had said, "I don't want to! They might walk out—as long as I don't give them the money I have the whip hand!"

Stephen didn't mention that. He said, "It should have been done. I made a mistake."

A mistake in not seeing the ruthlessness, the selfishness. A person who would treat a couple of old servants like that . . . Stephen thought, when Ida was sick Kay did everything for her, and we paid Ida's hospital bill—no, I never saw that bill. I meant to pay that. Kay must have done it. She always looked after people in her house. *All her domestics are clothed with double garments.* Those verses from Proverbs, which he had read and reread, kept running through his mind, exemplifying themselves in memories of Kay.

"Well, your action was the regular one and we can't foresee these things. I thought I'd arrange to have that legacy paid at once. I'm sure Mrs. Bowes would agree."

"No doubt," said Stephen. There was an ironic edge on the words that made Mr. Jelke glance curiously at his colleague. He was feeling favorably inclined toward the younger man today. The important and influential names which had lent Stephen their public support had certainly added to his stature. Respect for him grew in the older lawyer's wise and wily mind. We'd better hang onto him, he thought, even if he takes a beating in this campaign. He felt as if he owed Stephen something. He'd done good work on the Wendell estate, in spite of the complications.

He said, "I was going to suggest, Stephen, that if you can find time, in the midst of your political activities, to relieve me on that tax case for Western Power and Light, it would be helpful.

You should understand the tax situation from the government angle. There will be a nice little fee in it."

That fee will put me in the clear, thought Stephen, going back toward his own office. I can pay off my loan at the bank, take care of outstanding bills, and there might even be enough left to — he stopped his thought, for it was instinctively going toward what he could do for Kay. And he couldn't do anything for Kay. She wouldn't even use what he sent her.

He met Ralph Lamson, who said he was leaving for the day.

Stephen said, "What are you doing tonight? Meet me at the club and we'll have a little game."

"Thanks very much, Steve. Not tonight."

"Got a date, have you?"

Ralph looked embarrassed and then he came out with it. "I'm going out to the house to see Kay."

Stephen had a sudden and violent feeling of outrage but he tried to keep his voice calm.

"I suppose you see a good deal of Kay."

"No," said Ralph. The embarrassment had dropped away. "But I hope to see more of her. Is there any reason why I shouldn't?"

The reason is that she is my wife and no man has any right to want her. . . . No. There is no reason. I left her. I sent this very man to ask her to give me a divorce.

"It's entirely up to Kay," said Stephen.

RALPH and Kay talked of many things that evening, but their conversation, no matter how they tried to direct it, circled closer and closer to the questions in Kay's mind, finally coming to rest on them.

"Is it true that Lisa Bowes has gone away, Ralph?"

"Yes, she went some time ago. I've heard that she has no intention of coming back."

"Why did she go?"

"I don't know. The story is that she tired of waiting for you to divorce Steve and turned him down."

"He must hate me."

"I don't think so."

"But I'm responsible."

"You're responsible for a good many things. You will undoubtedly affect regional history."

"Not to any great extent."

"Every executive of a state leaves his mark on history, and Christofferson can certainly be counted on to leave a stain."

"You mean Steve can't be nominated?"

"He hasn't much chance unless you take him back, I'm afraid. Steve has good friends and considerable support. But the whispering campaigns have begun already. A man without a wife shouldn't be governor — who's to give the parties in the Mansion? That's the mildest one. Steve is credited with a variety of mistresses and a long career of vice — "

"Why did he file and let himself in for it?"

"Steve's a good citizen."

"I know that. Can't his friends stop that talk?"

"You're the only one who can."

He stopped and left one of his long pauses until finally she had to ask what he had not told her. "Does he want to come back?"

"All I know about that is that he won't make the move. I suggested talking to you about a reconciliation. He didn't want me to do that. I think the move would have to come from you."

"Then it's hopeless. Do you remember telling me what Steve said — that it had always been my marriage? After I'd thought that over and over, and got past what seemed the injustice — because I'd had to work — I began to see there was truth in it. It's a fault in our marriage that I didn't really know was there until Steve left me. Oh, there had been signs — he was sensitive about some money affairs, but I always thought we could work everything out when we had more money. I don't think so now."

She went on again, for his silence was like agreement.

"The trouble wasn't actually in my not having enough time for Steve, or in earning more than he did. It was that he didn't have the position in our marriage that a man should have. It wasn't that I didn't love him, but love isn't enough to make a marriage balance. If I go to Steve now and ask him to come back, it will still be my marriage. He would be in my debt in the way

a man shouldn't be to his wife. If Steve ever comes back, he must be the head of the house. But he must come to me. I can't go to him, for if I did I'd be taking one thing more away from him that should be his. I know this is true."

"I am very sure it is. Do you want me to let him know that you would welcome him if he did come back?"

"Oh, no — that amounts to the same thing — promise me you won't."

CHAPTER 22

"BUT, JANICE, here is another mistake in these letters. It should be forty-four yards of coral braid."

"I'm sorry," said Janice. Her voice broke and, looking up quickly, Kay saw how ragged and nervous her secretary looked.

"What's the matter, Jan? Don't you feel well?"

"I'm all right. It's just that I'm a little short of sleep."

"You're trying to do too much."

Janice was struggling against tears. "Once in a while things accumulate, that's all. And last night the baby had a cold and seemed to be breathing badly — she's all right today, though."

"But you were in a panic and didn't get any sleep."

"I will tonight."

"You can't ever count on that."

The tears broke loose, and Janice put her face in her hands. Kay, sitting behind her old oak desk, fingered thoughtfully the plaster rabbit that Colin had made for her. Finally she said, "I think you should quit working for a while, Janice. Stay home."

"But I can't afford to."

"You can't afford not to. You'll be no good to anyone if you keep on like this. No good to Joe, or your home — "

"I've been trying so hard to make it nice. I've tried — "

"You've tried so hard that you forgot what you were doing it for," said Kay. "You had to mop up the kitchen floor and wash out those towels at that time of night, when he — "

"Did Joe tell you that?"

"No. But I've done it myself. And when you went to bed

you couldn't sleep — and you think he isn't sympathetic and he thinks you're hysterical — oh, Janice, I've got to fire you."

"Because of those letters?"

Kay said, "No, not because of the letters. I'm going to let you go because I'm so fond of you. Joe has a job, and you're going to have enough to eat and a place to live. If you can't pay for some of the stuff you've bought on time, send it back. But go home where you belong, right now. It would be a break for Joe to have you stop work."

"Don't think I wouldn't like to stay home for a while — "

"You're going to have the chance."

"But you see, Mrs. Ryland, Joe expects that I'll earn something. We really married on that basis."

"I know — it was your dowry — you brought him your earning power. But right now he'd probably be glad to settle for the woman who greets him at night with a hot dish in the oven and the baby in bed, instead of a worn-out girl who tears in and slaps a steak in the broiler."

Janice gave a sudden wild laugh. "You know all about it, don't you?"

"I ought to. I've done it often enough. Anyway, you're fired, Janice, in spite of being the best secretary I've ever had. Someday I hope you'll come back — but you won't, you'll have another baby. Please get out those letters before you go. And of course you're on salary until the end of April."

Jan really can be beautiful at certain moments, Kay thought. Steve never thought so. He should see her now.

She went into the shop to talk with Davy. But the scene with Janice had stirred her personally and it was hard to fix her attention on work. She kept looking at her watch. She was still trying to decide whether she would really do what had been in her mind this morning, when she studied a political advertisement in the paper and told Ida she would not be home for dinner because she was going to a meeting.

ON THE NIGHT when he knew Ralph had gone to see Kay, Stephen had to exercise almost violent self-control to keep from

driving out past the house. He wouldn't let himself do it. But he couldn't stop himself from imagining the living room, the way she would come in, the talk — everyone always liked to talk to Kay. Anything and everything interested her. One of the things I miss is having her around to talk to — I never could talk to Lisa. No, that wasn't true. But with Lisa it was always about people, or herself and me. Kay has interests of her own.

He found himself thinking of that with some pride, and slapped the thought down. That had been part of the trouble. He recalled that Ralph had once said to him, "If I marry anyone, it would be a woman with a job of her own." Was it possible that even then Lamson had been hinting about Kay? Wasn't he playing fair? Was he after Kay from the start? But I had told him I wanted a divorce. There's no getting away from that.

STEPHEN never saw Kay on the street or in any public place. He often drove past the building in which her shop was located, but she never went in or came out as he was going by. He thought, I'd like to catch even a glimpse of her, just to see for myself that she's all right.

And then it happened. The campaign was beginning to gather momentum, and the Voters League had invited the leading candidates for office to present their platforms at a large public meeting in the city auditorium. As he sat on the dais, there was no reason for Stephen to turn his head almost awkwardly to stare up at the balcony on the left, but, as he saw Kay, it seemed to him that he had felt her there. She must know that he saw her — even at this distance his glance must carry. He moved his chair, half rose, and the man beside him said, "Wait a minute, Steve. He's not through introducing you."

Afterward he couldn't see Kay at all, and though he did not stop to shake the hands of any voters, the balcony had emptied by the time he got up there. But suddenly he had to see her again. It was necessary. Stephen did not even hesitate to turn the car in that direction.

For a minute he paused before the door, wondering if he should ring, and then that seemed a foolish thing to do, for the key was

in his hand. He'd be careful not to startle her. He opened the door and said, loudly enough, "It's Steve, Kay." There was no answer, but there were lights in the study and he found her there.

She had heard him. The shock was in her face. He couldn't read her expression, but he saw she wasn't going to put him out.

"I hope I didn't frighten you. I saw you at the meeting."

"Yes, I just got back."

"It was good of you to come. I was awfully glad to see you up there in the balcony. What did you think of the meeting?"

"Christofferson was poisonous, but I suppose some of them believed him. You were very good."

"Was I all right?"

"Yes, you really were. Why don't you sit down?"

He did. He said, "I just stopped in to see how you were. I won't stay but a minute."

"How strange for you to say that here in this house."

"Yes, strange. But, Kay, I want to tell you one thing. I want you to know it, though it doesn't help now. I haven't had a minute of real peace since I left this house."

"You must have been happy sometimes."

"I guess I thought I was. Maybe I was. I don't know. I'm not trying to make any excuses for myself. That's not what I came for. I wanted to make sure you were getting on all right. . . . Ralph Lamson says he's been seeing something of you lately."

"Yes, he was here."

"Ralph's a fine fellow," said Steve. "He's intelligent and honest and a hard worker. It's none of my business now, I know, but that might be all right—"

Kay looked at him with misery. "You know better," she said.

That broke through his pretension. Stephen dropped his head in his hands. "Oh, Kay, my darling, what have I done to us? Why did I do it? I know you won't believe me, but it wasn't just Lisa—"

"I know that. It was my fault too. I was to blame—"

"You were not in the least to blame. You looked after everybody, worked like a Trojan—"

"I didn't put the work first. You thought so. But there was something I didn't yield that you have to yield in a marriage. It's

the thing that makes the relation right between a man and a woman. It's not the work. I have to work. Not just for the money."

"Of course you do — it's part of you. And I'm proud of it. Why didn't we talk like this before?"

"I didn't know."

"Neither did I. And now it's too late to go back."

"We don't want to go back, do we?"

"But how could you forgive what I've done?"

"Do you want Lisa now?"

"Want her? I've almost forgotten her."

"Then it shouldn't be hard for me to forget."

"I haven't the right to ask you to take me back."

"You don't have to ask me. You have a right here. Not just in the four walls. But in our marriage. You have the most right."

"Do you want me?"

"I need my husband."

"Thank God for that," he said, and came home to her.

Later, Kay pulled back the curtains of their bedroom and opened the windows. She could feel the peace of their house, the love at rest in it. She could smell the spring. Tomorrow, she thought, I'll plant the crocuses. And I must find time to read that chapter in Proverbs.



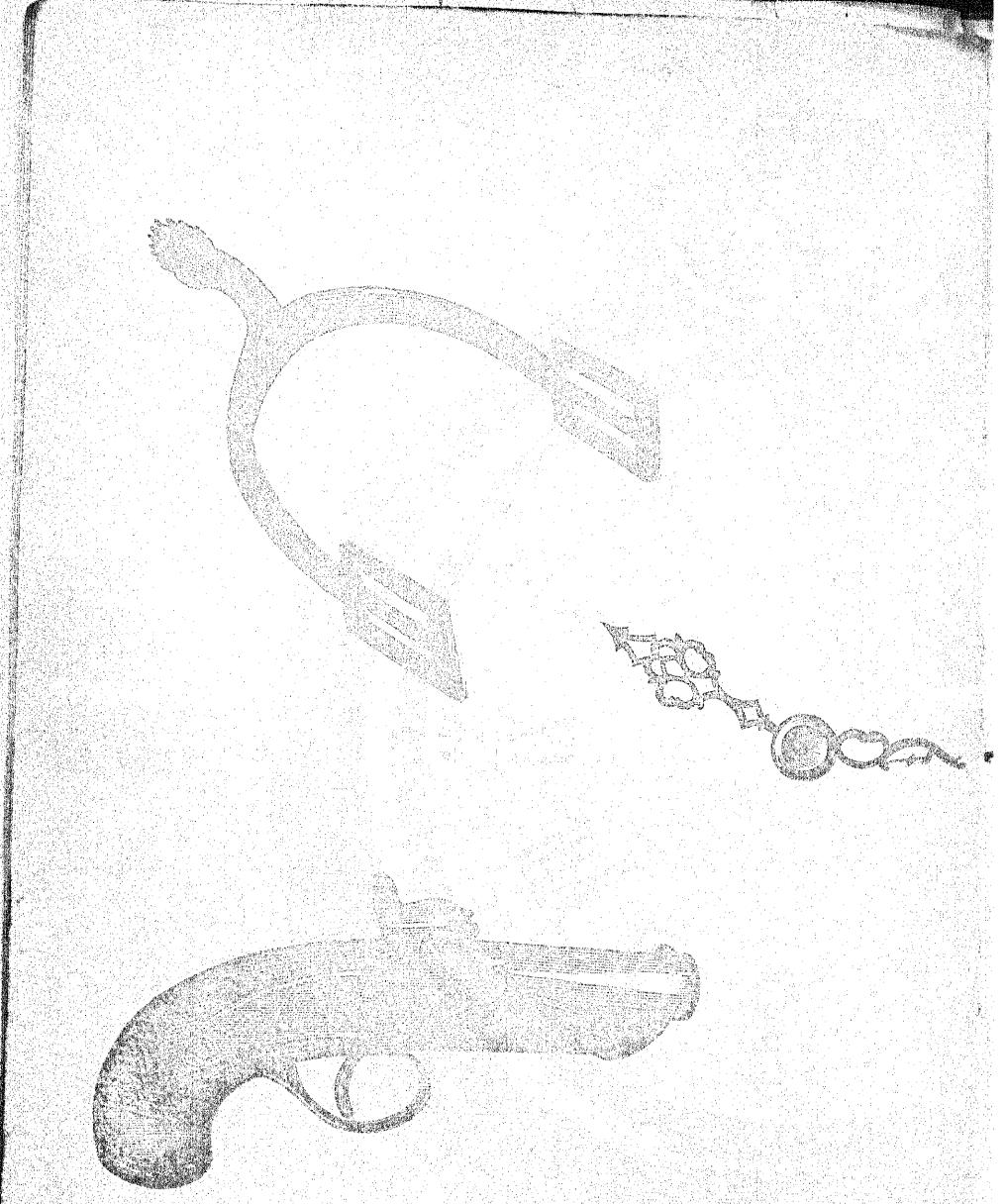


Margaret Culkin Banning

PROBABLY no author is better qualified to write about the problems of the wage-earning wife than Margaret Culkin Banning. Mrs. Banning married not long after graduation from Vassar; for many years thereafter her prolific pen contributed to the support of her home and the education of her children. She is the author of twenty-six books, several hundred short stories and scores of articles, including the widely quoted "The Case for Chastity," which she wrote for The Reader's Digest.

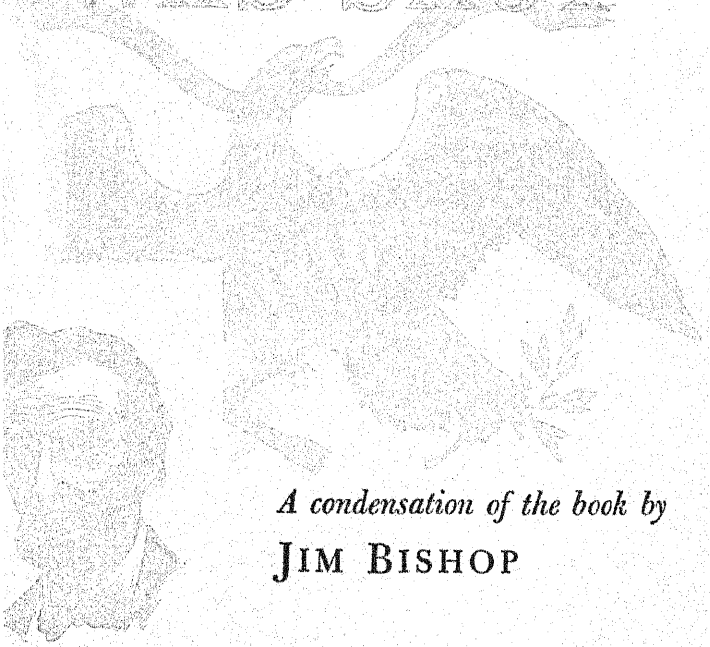
Her productivity as a writer does not preclude many other activities in her home city of Duluth. She writes: "I belong to thirty-eight organizations and always intend to resign from thirty-seven." Some years ago she was chosen for the Duluth Hall of Fame for her outstanding leadership in civic and welfare work — the first woman ever to have won this distinction.

THE DAY
LINCOLN WAS SHOT



Wood Engravings by Bernard Brussel-Smith

THE DAY LINCOLN WAS SHOT



A condensation of the book by

JIM BISHOP

"The Day Lincoln Was Shot," copyright 1955 by Jim Bishop, is published at $3.75 by Harper & Brothers, 49 E. 33rd St., New York 16, N. Y.

The Day Lincoln Was Shot is an enthralling, hour-by-hour account of the last day of Abraham Lincoln's life. In it we see the strange and fateful sequence of events that produced his assassination, plunged the Government into chaos and the nation into mourning. At every turn chance played into the hands of the assassin, the half-mad actor John Wilkes Booth. Step by step we follow Booth and his inept henchmen as the stage is set for the final act of the tragedy at Ford's Theatre. Simultaneously we watch the President, who, with a sort of foreknowledge of his end, works patiently to safeguard the nation so recently become the *United* States once more. There is tragedy, but there is also triumph, in this last day of a great man.

". . . a completely exciting, masterfully written book."

— Robert Price, Associated Press

". . . one of the most intriguing crime stories in all human history."

— Ernest Cady, *The Columbus Dispatch*

Daybreak

Seven a.m.

THE POLISHED rosewood door swung back and the President of the United States came from his bedroom. He nodded to the night guard in the hall and said, "Good morning." The hour of seven was late for Lincoln. Many a time, the guard remembered, the President was downstairs working at six.

The big man started down the hall slowly, like a person older than his fifty-six years, the legs bent at the knees, the black suit flapping about his frame. The circles under his tired eyes were pouched; the skin of his face was almost saffron; the scraggly black beard thinned and died as it approached the hairline; the feet moved with effort, barely lifting off the red pile rug; the thick lips, more brown than red, were pulled back in a semi-smile.

He saw the men ahead. The guards could not seem to keep them out, and many of them slept in the White House hall. The word had passed that he was coming, and they were on their feet and smiling. Each of them wanted a favor. As he passed, they asked for jobs or passes to Richmond or the commutation of a military sentence or presidential approval of an illegal business deal. In four years of living in the White House, Mr. Lincoln had become accustomed to the morning vultures. He had no desire to help them because, if their claims were just, they would have had satisfaction at the proper agency.

There was no way to avoid them. His bedroom was in the

southwest corner of the White House on the second floor, and his office was in the southeast corner on the same floor. Some men, desperate or arrogant, grabbed his arm and held him until he pulled loose and said: "I am sorry. I cannot be of help to you." Some wept. A few muttered threats.

Outside his office a soldier came to attention, and Lincoln nodded pleasantly and walked inside. It was a big office, bigger than two farm kitchens. He walked over to the far side, looked in the pigeonholes of the old desk and then sat at the small table near the south windows. He picked up a paper, crossed his legs and leaned back in the high chair. The light from the windows was not good; down behind the new dome of the Capitol the sun was fighting a battle with gray clouds.

The streets at this hour were full of people. Unofficial Washington was on its way to work. In offices and shops the business day began at 7:30 and the flagstone and wooden walks rang with the tempo of heavy boots. Teams of horses pulled heavy brewery wagons and loads of produce to the taverns and markets. Ducks and chickens picked along Pennsylvania Avenue, edging around the horses, and pigs wallowed and grunted in the puddles.

Washington City was a place of cobblestones and iron wheels, of hoop skirts and gaslight, of livery stables and taverns and two-story brick houses with attics. From almost any point in the city the dominating features were the Capitol and the Washington Monument. In character and habit, the town was Southern. Compared to New York, Philadelphia, Chicago or Baltimore, it was a small town but pompous — a city of individual persons with unique passions and ambitions.

The currently popular song was "When This Cruel War Is Over." Women hurried each day to buy the freshest editions of the newspapers to study the columns of war dead. With a finger on type, they performed the simple, breathless duty of moving from column to column until they found a heading marked "Ord's Corps" or "Sheridan's Army." Then Mrs. Jones moved her finger down to the J's, expelled a big breath, and began to read the news.

The White House was large and shabby. Successive Congresses

had refused to repair it. The rugs were patchy and thin from traffic and mud. Souvenir hunters had cut swatches from the drapes and had stolen silverware and even snuff boxes.

The white-columned building faced Pennsylvania Avenue, behind an iron-paling fence. Paths to various Government departments traversed the lawns. The south grounds, facing the Potomac River, had stables, outhouses and work buildings. Squatters tented on these grounds, and little Tad Lincoln kept goats there. Pennsylvania Avenue had one sidewalk, on the west side. On the other side were open markets and a drainage ditch.

South and east of the White House were acres of Negro shanties. The newly freed slaves had come North to be treated as people; there were too many of them and Negro women went from house to house offering to work for anything, for food for their children.

Hotels were an innovation to the city, which had been accustomed to boardinghouses and taverns as homes-away-from-home, and they eased the lives of legislators and their wives considerably. The Willard was considered by the fashionable set as *the* place to be seen. Kirkwood House, where Vice-President Johnson stayed, was another good hotel. The National catered to Southerners, although not exclusively, for on this morning of April 14 its registry listed the names of ex-Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire and his family; and John Wilkes Booth, an actor, of Bel Air, Maryland, who, to Hale's dismay, was being overattentive to his daughter.

This day was Good Friday, the day on which Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ died. It was the first day on which the Civil War would be referred to in the past tense. More than 600,000 men North and South were dead under hyacinth and weeds and swale grass and rock. But the war was over, except for Confederate General Joseph Johnston's exhausted army and a few smaller units farther west, and Washington had been drunk for a week.

AT 7:30 a.m. the President still sat at the small table in his office, reading official correspondence, one leg across the other, the free foot flexing slowly in air.

A few streets to the north, on K Street, Secretary of War Edwin McMasters Stanton spooned his soft-boiled eggs and asked Mrs. Stanton to please send regrets to Mrs. Lincoln. He was not a playgoer and he was not going to be a member of her theater party tonight. Countless times he had advised the President to stay out of theaters and to cut all public appearances to a minimum, but in social matters he had found that a Secretary of War carries less weight than a First Lady. He also asked Mrs. Stanton to get the handyman to fix the bellpull on the front door, which was broken. He was in a hurry; he wanted to visit poor Seward before reporting to the War Department.

Stanton was a short, paunchy person who affected square gold-rimmed spectacles and gray, scented whiskers, and had the impatient, fluttery attitude of a man who is always trying to catch a mental train. He made and broke men mercilessly. He was loyal, stubborn, hard-working, emotional, hated. He had sometimes locked horns with Mr. Lincoln, yet the President had said of him: "Stanton is the rock upon which are beating the waves of this conflict. . . . Without him, I should be destroyed."

Across the street from the White House, on Lafayette Square, the oldest man in the Cabinet was being shaved in bed in his room on the third floor front. He was William H. Seward, nearly sixty-four, Secretary of State, and he was in constant pain. On April 5 his horses had run away with his carriage, smashing it against the curb. He had sustained a broken arm, a broken jaw, multiple contusions, and concussion of the brain.

He lay on the extreme edge of the bed, so that his broken right arm could hang free, and there was a double iron brace around his neck and jaw. When Stanton came in to ask how he felt, Seward was listening to his son Frederick, Assistant Secretary of State, explain what he planned to say, in his father's name, at the Cabinet meeting this morning.

Over at the Metropolitan Hotel, a group of Michael O'Laughlin's friends watched him get out of bed, hung over and sad of eye. They had come down from Baltimore yesterday to celebrate the end of the war. Already dressed themselves, they laughed as Mike

sat on the edge of his bed in long drawers and tried to orient himself. He was a small man with long black hair and heavy imperial mustaches. They asked him if he could stand a drink and he said he could, after he got a shave.

Mr. O'Laughlin was an old friend of John Wilkes Booth and one of the original band of conspirators.

At the National Hotel, John Wilkes Booth got out of bed and washed. He had had less than six hours of sleep, having spent most of the night rounding up his fellow conspirators. He was a vain man, courtly and meticulous. He scrubbed carefully, rubbed scented pomade in his hair and on his black mustache, put on a fresh suit and riding boots, checked the money in his wallet and stepped out of his room. This man had earned $20,000 in a year as an actor. As a Southern patriot, he earned nothing.

He was not tall, but he had the lean and bouncy air of a man ready to spring. His hair was as black as washed coal, and his eyes had a liquid quality which found a quick response in many women. At twenty-six, he was a fine horseman, an expert fencer, a crack shot. In the world of the theater, he was only slightly less known than his father, Junius, who had been one of America's great Shakespearean tragedians, and his elder brother Edwin, perhaps America's greatest Shakespearean actor. Wilkes had bowed legs, but he hid them with custom-made wide pantaloons and extra-long coats.

As he left his room on Good Friday morning, his friend George Atzerodt was registering for a room he did not want at Kirkwood House, Twelfth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Mr. Atzerodt was assigned to Room 126, at the head of the stairs, on the left side of the corridor, almost directly above the room occupied by Vice-President Andrew Johnson. Atzerodt took the key to his room and walked out, to get as drunk as possible as quickly as possible. His assignment today was to kill the Vice-President of the United States.

Down in Fort Monroe, Virginia, young Samuel Arnold had been out of bed an hour. Once, like his friend Michael O'Laughlin, he had been a Confederate soldier. Now he was a store clerk outside a Union fortress. In Sam's pocket was a letter from Wilkes

Booth asking him to come to Washington at once. Arnold knew what that meant. The old plot to kidnap the President was being revived. Sam was afraid of it.

In the Navy Yard section of Washington City, David Herold sat on the edge of his bed and wondered what time it was. David was twenty-three, looked seventeen and had the mentality of a boy of eleven. His nose curved like a scimitar and he had black hair and a beardless face. He was an unemployed drugstore clerk. This young man had three loves: John Wilkes Booth; hunting in southern Maryland; and practical jokes. His only resentment was that fate had given him seven sisters, who lectured him and giggled when he tried to raise a mustache.

At Herndon House on Ninth Street, a block from Ford's Theatre, Lewis Paine slept late this morning. He was formidable, even in repose. He had no job, no ambition, no money, no girl—and his only desire was to please Booth. He placed no higher value on the lives of others than he did on his own, which was none.

At 541 H Street, Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, a widow with a plain, unlovely face, was cleaning up after breakfast, assisted by her seventeen-year-old daughter Anna, who had secretly pasted Booth's picture behind a lithograph in her room. The Surratt boardinghouse was where the conspirators met.

Eight a.m.

AT BREAKFAST, President Lincoln listened to his grown son Robert. The boy had just returned from a tour of duty with General Grant, and Lincoln wanted his son's firsthand opinions about the last days of the war. Mrs. Lincoln sat at the opposite end of the table, flanked by Robert and little Tad. She was birdlike and happy this morning.

Robert, as a joke, presented a picture of General Robert E. Lee to his father. The President, far from taking it as a joke, studied

the portrait a long time and then said: "It is a good face. I am glad the war is over at last."

Mrs. Lincoln said that she had tickets for Grover's Theatre, which was staging a celebration tonight, but that she would rather see Laura Keene in *Our American Cousin* at Ford's. With little interest, the President said that he would take care of it. Mother, as the President called his wife, asked Robert if he would join them and he said that he was sorry, but that he had promised to spend the evening with some friends. Tad complained that nobody asked him to go. He was twelve and had a cleft palate and a lisp which kept him from regular attendance at school.

Mrs. Lincoln asked if the Grants would join them at the theater and the President said that he guessed they would, that Grant was a great hero and that the people were entitled to a look at him. She asked her husband if he would have time today for an afternoon drive. The President said that he did not know; he would see.

Mary Todd Lincoln was the mainspring of this family. Ten years younger than the President, she was extravagant, economically and emotionally. When something was mildly funny, Mary laughed hysterically. When something was mildly sad, she wept hysterically. She had terrifying dreams and often, when she awakened crying, the President would hurry to put his arms around her and comfort her.

She was extravagant, but she was generous too. When gifts of fruits and wines reached the White House, she loaded them in a carriage and drove out to the Soldiers' Home on Seventh Street and gave them to the wounded. She was never too weary to make the trip, and nothing could make her hurry away from the bedsides. On days when she noted that her husband looked tired, she dropped her own plans and suggested that he come with her for a drive. At other times she invited old Illinois friends to breakfast so that his mood might be brightened.

Across town from the White House, Noah Brooks was writing. He was a correspondent who wrote articles for newspapers in distant cities. The weakness in what Mr. Brooks wrote, ac-

cording to some readers, was that he was a particular friend to the President. This morning he wrote that the President's enemies "form but an inconsiderable portion of the great mass of the loyal people." The people, Brooks found, "have an implicit and truthful faith in Lincoln. . . ."

The reporter was exaggerating. The people of the South had no faith in Lincoln. The people of the North felt, in the main, that he was a stumbling, homely man whose "wrong" guesses, comically enough, were always justified in the end.

On this Good Friday, the Republican Party was cracking under the President's feet. The Butlers, the Wades, the Greeleys and the Sumners, added to the Democrats who despised him, would undo Lincoln if they could. To them, the President stood for a soft peace; a let's-bind-the-wounds-and-get-back-to-work peace. Many of the ranking Republicans in Senate and House wanted peace with a whip. The South was on her knees and, to them, it was not enough. They wanted to see her bleed.

THE PRESIDENT got up from the breakfast table and said that he must be off to work. He walked back to his office and sat down at his big desk.

In the center of the room was a round oak table where Cabinet meetings were held. It was covered with a heavy green tasseled cloth. Around the room were chairs and two horsehair sofas. At the south end of the room—where he had sat reading earlier—were his pigeonhole desk and the small window table and a worn old chair. Near the entrance to the office was a small door behind which were a basin, a mirror, a wall-bracket gas lamp, some soap, a towel and a comb.

The books in the room were few: a Bible, the Statutes of the United States of America and a complete set of Shakespeare's works. Over a mantel hung an engraving of President Andrew Jackson. Behind Mr. Lincoln's chair was a velvet bell cord for summoning secretaries. A soldier outside the office door brought the cards of guests.

Before admitting the first visitor, the President scanned the morning newspapers. He seldom read them.

The Days Before

The President

To see this one day clearly, it is necessary to see the President and John Wilkes Booth in the weeks prior to the event. A certain pattern of events can be seen, and this pattern tends to increase, rather than diminish, the shame of the United States Government on April 14, 1865.

In early 1865 Government officials were deeply concerned about the possibility of the President's being assassinated. They worried about it and they counterplotted against it. But they assumed that an assassination plot would involve the Confederate States of America versus the United States of America. It seems not to have occurred to any ranking official that it might be a lonely band of fanatics versus the United States Government.

Secretary of War Stanton's bureau of spies was uncovering plots in Richmond and in Washington almost weekly. In the main, these plots probably did not exist, but the newspaper stories made the people conscious of assassination, and pressure was brought to bear on Stanton and on the President to be more careful.

Early in 1865, four members of the metropolitan police force were appointed to guard the President. Two were on duty daily from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. A third came on duty at 4 p.m. and remained at Mr. Lincoln's side until midnight. The fourth man sat in the hall outside Mr. Lincoln's bedroom from midnight to 8 a.m. Their specific order was to remain within a few feet of the President at all times and, in public, to look for faces they could not vouch for.

At about the same time, Stanton selected a troop of Ohio light cavalry, mounted on fine black horses, to act as presidential escort any time Lincoln left the Executive Mansion. Mr. Lincoln

said that Stanton was going too far. He was amused by all the fuss and furor whenever he left the White House for an afternoon drive and on some days he made a game of trying to evade the cavalry escort.

Withal, everyone worried about assassination and no one believed it would happen. Except one. Ward Hill Lamon, United States Marshal for the District of Columbia, not only feared it—he was certain that it would happen. In 1864, this fear overpowered him so much that, in stretches, he slept in the hall outside Lincoln's bedroom. Assassination was his *idée fixe*.

Lamon and Lincoln were old and dear friends. The President trusted him as he trusted few men, but he did not share his fears. Mr. Lincoln's philosophy was that he could be killed at any time by anyone who was willing to give his own life in return. Now and then the President discussed a violent death, but his attitude was one of sadness and resignation rather than fright.

THE DAYS of March were shiny with victory and short-term promise. The dusty banners of the Union snapped southward out of Fredericksburg, westward out of Old Point, northward out of Savannah, eastward out of Lynchburg. The noose tightened, hour by hour. The city to watch was Petersburg. When that fell, the final kill would occur at Richmond.

The South fought with valiance and empty bellies. General Ulysses S. Grant repeatedly curled the whip of his Army of the Potomac around Lee's legs, and waited for his adversary to ask for mercy. Each day, Lee was a little bit weaker. Each day, Grant snapped the whip a little harder.

The people of the North had waited an eternal four years for this. They sensed that the war was in the twilight stage, and hungered for the end. They celebrated Lincoln's second inaugural as they had not celebrated the first one. They came into Washington on excursion trains and in stagecoaches and carryalls and farm wagons, and they jammed the hotels and boardinghouses and outlying farms.

On the night before the inauguration, Lincoln worked in his office, and Vice-President Andrew Johnson, a professional com-

mon man from Tennessee, attended a party. The Vice-President had been ill. He was also a poor drinker. That night he got drunk. Sick drunk.

The day of March 4 was rainy. Below the inauguration platform, on the east plaza of the Capitol, the crowd under their umbrellas looked like a vast bed of dark mushrooms. In the Senate gallery were Mrs. Lincoln, Admiral Farragut and General Hooker. The diplomatic corps, in dazzling uniforms and cocked hats, joined them just as the justices of the United States Supreme Court came into the well below. The President sat in the front row on a low seat, his knees high, his ancient face lighted briefly by recognition of friends. Seward sat at his left, followed by other Cabinet members. The Vice-President would be sworn in here. Afterward Mr. Lincoln would be sworn in outside.

Andrew Johnson, red-faced and nervous and intoxicated, arrived on the arm of the outgoing Vice-President, Hannibal Hamlin, who introduced him. In a few minutes Johnson disgraced himself. His theme was "the people," and his speech abounded in phrases like "humble as I am, plebeian as I may be deemed." His effort was to demean himself before these high personages but, having done it, he did it again. And again.

The brilliant assemblage was shocked. The little man was obviously drunk. Hamlin pulled at Johnson's coattails. Out front, the faces were frozen. Lincoln alone looked sad and composed. There was disgust in the crowd, and Johnson would feel it the rest of his days.

At last, after what might be called a Tennessee stump speech, the whole party moved out to the plaza and President Lincoln was sworn in. His address amounted to less than four pages of copy, and within five minutes he had closed it with the words: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

The President's speech got perfunctory attention from the press,

which labeled it "conciliatory" toward the South. The big news was not published; it was whispered. Andy Johnson had been drunk. In caucus, some Senators said that Johnson should resign.

Lincoln defended Johnson, and yet he must have been irritated because after that he would not see the Vice-President, although Johnson waited around for an interview. The next time that the President expressed a desire to see "Andy" was on the one day when a clairvoyant chief executive would feel the need of a Vice-President — April 14, 1865 — *the* day.

At the time of his inauguration Mr. Lincoln was thirty-five pounds underweight. He looked old and sick; he walked like a man whose feet hurt. He had fought as hard as any soldier in the field to reunite the states. Now, in the closing days of the war, his spirit seemed to flag. The Surgeon General, Doctor Barnes, was worried about a breakdown.

For a while, everyone became solicitous of his health and his time. The police guards cleared the upstairs corridor of office seekers and favor seekers. His secretaries tried to hold the appointment calendar down, and his wife coaxed him to take drives on sunny days.

On April 2, the Confederacy fell. No one in the North knew it but, shortly after church services in Richmond, Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet fled the city. That was the end, even though Lee and Johnston still fought in the East. The President, visiting Grant's headquarters at City Point, Virginia, was unaware of it.

But the next day everybody knew the news. A telegraph key in the War Department started an insistent chatter:

"From Richmond," it began. Two army operators listened in bug-eyed disbelief, then emitted a whoop and ordered an apprentice telegrapher to copy the rest of it. They threw up a front window and began to roar, in unison: "Richmond has fallen! Richmond has fallen!" Citizens on the walk below looked up; drays and carriages came to a stop. The cry was taken up, and the word began to spread quickly and wildly. Stranger hugged stranger and the taverns did a brisk morning business. The courts adjourned. Children skipped home from school. The banks closed. Church

bells tolled. An impromptu parade started on Sixth Street, the first of many. Orators stood on hotel steps, faces red, arms waving, but not a word was heard in the bedlam.

This was going to go on, sporadically, for twelve days. It was the wildest celebration known to the young Republic and it would not end until the nation was plunged into deepest grief.

And yet the war was not quite over. Lee's army was still in the field; it had its fighting units intact, its stores, its staff. It was dying in dignity, and no one in Grant's Army of the Potomac was celebrating.

From City Point, the President sent word to Stanton that he was about to sail upriver to take a look at burned-out Richmond, and the Secretary of War was beset with misgivings. Had he the power, Stanton would have placed the President under military detention to keep him out of Richmond. He sent a respectful but admonitory message to Lincoln, urging him not to expose himself to danger.

The President was comforted by the solicitude of his Secretary of War, but took a boat up the river to Richmond. When he disembarked at a riverbank on the edge of the Confederate capital, a small group of Negroes recognized him from pictures. They began to shout and bow and a group gathered about him, a few kneeling to kiss his black shoes.

"Don't kneel to me," the President said sharply. "This is not right." He glanced around the circle of dark faces and saw the wonderment in them. "You must kneel to God only, and thank Him for the liberty you will hereafter enjoy. I am but God's humble instrument, but you may rest assured that, as long as I live, no one shall put a shackle to your limbs, and you shall have all the rights which God has given to every other free citizen of this Republic."

He had injected the somber note: *"As long as I live . . ."*

THE State Department ordered a grand illumination of all Federal buildings in the District of Columbia in celebration of the fall of the Confederate capital. At twilight, an army band crashed into "The Star-Spangled Banner" and in an instant the

buildings swam in a pool of yellow flame. For the first time, the Capitol was lighted from basement to dome by gas, and across the front in letters two stories high blazed the message:

THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING; IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES.

The cheerful flicker of candles could be seen in almost every home on every street. Except at Mrs. Mary Surratt's boarding-house. Here the shades were drawn and the owner wept. Her sympathy was with the South.

ON PALM SUNDAY afternoon — April 9 — the President returned to Washington City. He had just heard about Seward's carriage accident and he hurried to his Secretary of State.

At "The Old Clubhouse," the Seward home, Lincoln walked up two flights of stairs and tiptoed into the Secretary's darkened room. Seward was on the side of the bed away from the door. Bandages and dressings covered his entire head except for the purple eyes and the cruelly ripped mouth. Without moving the broken jaw, he whispered: "You are back from Richmond?"

"Yes," said the President, "and I think we are near the end, at last."

Then he did something rare and impulsive. He sprawled on his stomach across the empty side of the bed, and he told his Secretary all that had happened in Virginia in the past week. Lincoln was still talking, a half hour later, when he studied Seward's eyes and saw that he was sleeping. The President arose softly, and tiptoed from the room.

At 9 p.m. on that Palm Sunday night Secretary Stanton received from Grant the news of Lee's surrender. He hurried to the White House. The President was in the Red Room with Mrs. Lincoln and some friends. Lincoln was standing with his back to the coal grate, flicking his coattails as the dispatch was read. It was greeted with stunned silence. All faces seemed blank; the expressions were almost the same as if the news had been bad.

Around this time — it may have been this night — Stanton asked to see the President alone and handed him his resignation. Lincoln

read it through and tore it slowly, dropping the fragments into a basket. He placed his big hands on Stanton's shoulders.

"You cannot go," he said. "Reconstruction is more difficult and dangerous than construction or destruction. You have been our main reliance. You must help us through the final act. . . . You understand the situation better than anyone else, and it is my wish and the country's that you remain."

On Monday people huddled in the rain before the White House. Now and then a cry of "Speech!" went up. The President sent word out that he was behind in his work and he advised the people to disperse. One of the things he did on this bleak Monday was to sit for Gardner, the photographer. While the pictures were being taken Tad frolicked around the room, bouncing on and off his father's lap, distracting Mr. Lincoln to the point that, for the first time, he smiled faintly in a picture.*

THE FORMAL celebration of Lee's surrender was held on Tuesday evening, April 11. A huge crowd filled Pennsylvania Avenue and trampled the shrubs of the White House grounds. A reporter wrote: "There is something terrible in their enthusiasm."

A hanging mob had come to listen to a man of mercy.

"Lincoln! Lincoln!" the crowd chanted. Two who pressed forward and managed to achieve a good position beside a tall tree were John Wilkes Booth and his friend Lewis Paine. Booth was impelled to hear the man he hated.

The people were becoming impatient when a French window was opened and the President could be seen in silhouette. The cheers were frenzied. He waited gravely until he had near silence.

The crowd listened for exultation, and there was none. They waited for vengeance, and there was none. The President talked soberly about reconstruction and about postwar problems. "It is unsatisfactory to some," he said slowly, "that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man." The crowd was quiet. "I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very

*This photograph appears facing page 288. The line across the top of the picture is a crack in the original glass negative.

intelligent, and on those who served our cause as soldiers. . . ."

John Wilkes Booth sucked in a long breath. He tapped Lewis Paine on the arm. "That's the last speech he will ever make," the actor said. The two men edged out of the crowd.

Later, inside the Executive Mansion, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln entertained a few friends in the Red Room. To make conversation, Mrs. Lincoln said that, in the midst of joy, her husband's face looked long and solemn. The President said that his mind had been heavy. The faces turned toward him.

"It seems strange," he went on slowly, "how much there is in the Bible about dreams. There are, I think, some sixteen chapters in the Old Testament and four or five in the New in which dreams are mentioned; and there are many other passages throughout the book which refer to visions. If we believe the Bible, we must accept the fact that, in the old days, God and His angels came to men in their sleep and made themselves known in dreams."

Mr. Lincoln studied the suddenly solemn faces of his friends. "Nowadays," he said apologetically, "dreams are regarded as very foolish and are seldom told, except by old women and by young men and maidens in love."

Mrs. Lincoln looked worried. "Do you believe in dreams?"

"I can't say that I do," he said, hedging against the nightmares she had suffered for many years, "but I had one the other night which has haunted me ever since. After it occurred, the first time I opened the Bible, strange as it may appear, it was at the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis, which relates the wonderful dream Jacob had. I turned to other passages, and seemed to encounter a dream or a vision wherever I looked. . . . Everywhere my eyes fell upon passages recording matters strangely in keeping with my own thoughts. . . ."

Mrs. Lincoln clutched her bosom. "You frighten me," she breathed.

"I am afraid," he said, "that I have done wrong to mention the subject at all. But somehow the thing has gotten possession of me and, like Banquo's ghost, it will not down."

She asked about the dream and he told it.

"About ten days ago, I retired very late. I had been waiting

up for important dispatches. I could not have been long in bed when I fell into a slumber, for I was weary. I soon began to dream. There seemed to be a deathlike stillness about me. Then I heard subdued sobs, as if a number of people were weeping. I thought I left my bed and wandered downstairs.

"There the silence was broken by the same pitiful sobbing, but the mourners were invisible. I went from room to room. No living person was in sight, but the same mournful sounds of distress met me as I passed along. It was light in all the rooms; every object was familiar to me, but where were all the people who were grieving as if their hearts would break?

"I was puzzled and alarmed. . . . Determined to find the cause of a state of things so mysterious and so shocking, I kept on until I arrived in the East Room, which I entered. There I met with a sickening surprise. Before me was a catafalque, on which rested a corpse in funeral vestments. Around it were stationed soldiers who were acting as guards; and there was a throng of people, some gazing mournfully upon the corpse, whose face was covered, others weeping pitifully.

" 'Who is dead in the White House?' I demanded of one of the soldiers.

" 'The President,' was his answer. 'He was killed by an assassin.'

"Then came a loud burst of grief from the crowd, which awoke me from my dream. I slept no more that night and, although it was only a dream, I have been strangely annoyed by it ever since."

Mr. Lincoln fell silent. No one spoke. Mrs. Lincoln looked frightened. "That is horrid," she said. "I wish you had not told it. I am glad I don't believe in dreams, or I should be in terror from this time forth."

The President smiled. "It was only a dream, Mother. Let us say no more about it, and try to forget it."

Friends began to make their adieus. Secretary of the Interior Usher elected to stay a moment longer. So did Ward Hill Lamon. The President had asked Lamon to go to Richmond as his personal representative. Now, when the others had departed, and Mrs. Lincoln had said her good nights, Usher and Lamon begged the President not to go out after nightfall until Lamon returned.

"Usher," Mr. Lincoln said banteringly, "this boy is a monomaniac on the subject of my safety. I can hear him, or hear of his being around, at all times of the night, to prevent somebody from murdering me." He grasped Lamon's shoulders in his big hands and shook them gently. "What does anybody want to assassinate me for? If anyone wants to do so, he can do it any day or night, if he is ready to give his life for mine. It is nonsense."

The Secretary of the Interior shook his head. "Mr. Lincoln," he said, "it is well to listen to Lamon. He is thrown among people who know more about such matters than we can know."

Lamon brought up the subject of the dream, and the President tried to make light of it by telling a humorous anecdote. But the President laughed alone. "Well," he said, sobering and pulling his watch, "let it go. I think the Lord in His own good time and way will work this out all right. God knows what is best."

ON THE DAY before Mr. Lincoln's appointment with destiny, General and Mrs. Grant arrived in Washington. This was on Thursday, April 13. The hero of the war was on his way to Burlington, New Jersey, to see his two children. He stopped off in Washington only because Stanton wanted him to advise how to cut army personnel and to cancel certain army contracts. The General figured that he could do this chore in a day — or two at most.

At the War Department, he was given a desk and, after a round of handshaking and congratulations, began the work of cutting the expenses of a wartime army. In the late afternoon, Secretary of War Stanton stopped in to say good night. Grant told him that he had received an invitation from the President to attend the theater tomorrow night.

Stanton was irritated, and urged Grant not to attend. He said that he and other Cabinet members had warned Lincoln about these public appearances many times, and that he, Stanton, had made it a rule to turn down all such invitations. Washington City, the Secretary of War said, was "Secesh" to the core, a place of wild-eyed plots and explosive Southern temperament. Stanton urged the General to refuse the invitation and asked him to use his good offices to keep Lincoln from attending the theater.

The Conspiracy

ALTHOUGH the two men had never met, Lincoln had been John Wilkes Booth's emotional whipping boy for at least four years. It was a passionate and violent hatred of the self-feeding type. It may be that the President offended the actor by proclaiming his intention of holding the Union together against the wishes of the Southern secessionists. Booth was a Southerner by choice. His roots were in northern Maryland, at Bel Air, and although many Marylanders served the Confederacy the state remained officially Northern. Booth, though fearless, did not enlist to fight for the cause he loved. When friends asked why, he said that he had made a promise to his mother. Booth's apologists say that he had an unnatural fear of having his face scarred.

He was not insane, if his acts and his conversation can be weighed psychologically, but he was emotionally immature—his sexual excesses and his inability to take orders tend to give one that impression. On the other hand he was shrewd and generous and a loyal friend.

Above all, Booth had pride. He thought of his family as one of the finest in Maryland although his father had been called an insane alcoholic and had not married his mother until years after the first babies had been born. His love for his sister amounted to adoration. His affection for his older brother Edwin was more restrained, because Edwin had voted for Lincoln.

At the age of seventeen, Booth had made his debut at the St. Charles Theatre in Baltimore. The boy quickly developed into an outrageous scene thief, but he played his parts with such heightened enthusiasm that the audiences idolized him. By 1860, he was an established theatrical star and toured the South and West to jammed houses, although he was only twenty-two. His backstage conquests were common gossip. He took his women as he took his brandy, in long careless draughts, and tossed the empties on a refuse heap.

When Lincoln was elected for a second term, Booth decided that it was time to contribute, in a big way, to the Confederacy. He would kidnap the President and smuggle him through the lines into Richmond. This plan, if executed, would make a historic figure of the actor; it would humble the man he hated; and it would force the North to exchange prisoners, something the man-rich North refused to do for the man-poor South.

In the late autumn of 1864, Booth explored possible escape routes from Washington. The best one for his purpose lay across the Navy Yard Bridge, at the foot of Eleventh Street. On the far side was southern Maryland, a big peninsula of little villages and secessionist intrigue. No armies stirred the mustard dust of its roads; it was neglected by both the big protagonists, except as a courier route for spies. Booth explored this route, from the Navy Yard Bridge down to Port Tobacco, where, for a price, one could secure a boat and cross into Virginia slightly below Fredericksburg. On these scouting trips he posed as a farm buyer and a horse trader. Thus he met Dr. Samuel Mudd of Bryantown, a humorless farmer who had not practiced medicine in years. Mudd was anxious to sell some land to the actor. In this he did not succeed, but Booth did buy two horses from one of Mudd's friends — a small saddle horse and a large roan with fetlocks like a brewery horse. This horse was blind in one eye.

That winter he went to New York, where he made a proposal to Mr. Samuel Knapp Chester, a character actor who depended for work on friendly stars like Booth. He told Chester that he was engaged in a conspiracy to capture the heads of the United States Government, including Lincoln, and to bring them to Richmond, and he wanted Chester to help him.

"Your work will be simple, Sam," Booth said. "All you will have to do is open the back door of Ford's Theatre at a signal."

Shocked and bewildered, Chester refused. He had expected a business proposition, a chance to make some "side" money. Now he was being offered a chance to help perpetrate a deed so foul that he had to keep staring at Booth to be assured of the seriousness of his friend. It was beyond comprehension.

"We have parties on the other side who will coöperate with

us," Booth said. "There are between fifty and a hundred people in this. I urge you to come in with us."

"No," said Chester.

For twenty minutes Booth argued and finally threatened but Chester remained firm in his refusal, though he said he would not betray the plot.

John Wilkes Booth was lying. There were never more than seven persons in his plot. In the main, they were simple-minded schemers. Each — with one exception — had a greater loyalty to Booth than to the South. At no time did he seek official sanction, or even unofficial sanction, from the South.

BETWEEN January and April 1865, the conspirator put about $4000 into unsuccessful plots to "capture" the President. The first attempt was scheduled for the night of Wednesday, January 18, when it had been announced that Mr. Lincoln and two friends would attend Ford's Theatre.

A few days before, Booth stopped at the home of his sister Asia, in Philadelphia, to sign a letter he had left in her keeping. It was to be released if he was captured or killed. This was a letter to the history books. It is a long, rambling document, replete with the customary calls to God to bear witness, the breast beating, the indictment, heartbreak, mother and flag. The substance of it is: "Right or wrong, God judge me, not man. . . . The south can make no choice. It is either extermination or slavery for *themselves* (worse than death) to draw from. I know *my* choice. . . . My love . . . is for the south alone. Nor do I deem it a dishonor in attempting to make for her a prisoner of this man to whom she owes so much of misery. . . ." He signed this letter, "A confederate doing duty upon his own responsibility. J. Wilkes Booth."

He then hurried back to Washington. He sent to Baltimore for two boyhood friends, Michael O'Laughlin and Sam Arnold. Both were Confederate veterans, hardened to the rigors of war, but they were shocked when their old friend told them the mission. Neither of these recruits was bright. Booth convinced them that they were part of a big secret band. They had not met the rest of his group, which consisted of George A. Atzerodt, a German

carriage maker from Port Tobacco; David Herold, who was mentally retarded; and twenty-year-old John Surratt, Confederate courier, whose mother managed the boardinghouse.

Booth still needed someone who could turn out all the lights in a theater on cue. Having been refused by Sam Chester, he tried to enlist the services of a small-parts actor in Washington named John Matthews. But the little man recoiled, and advised the star to forget it. "Matthews," said Booth later, "is a coward and not fit to live." The actor would not forget his contempt of Matthews, and would try to hurt him.

The conspirators — with the exception of Arnold and O'Laughlin — met at Mrs. Surratt's boardinghouse. They whispered, consulted in upstairs rooms, bought pistols and became acquainted with their workings. Once the widow Surratt asked her son John why these men were trooping into the house at odd hours and John said that they were all interested in an oil speculation. Mrs. Surratt admired Booth, the courtly gentleman who attracted the eye of her seventeen-year-old daughter, Anna. But there is no evidence to show that she ever knew anything about a plot.

The boardinghouse kept Mrs. Surratt and Anna alive. Years before, she and her husband had had a farm and a tavern in southern Maryland and the Government had made Mr. Surratt a postmaster and had called the crossroads Surrattsville. After Mr. Surratt died, his widow leased farm and tavern to Mr. John Lloyd, a drunkard with a poor memory who later figured in the plot. When Mrs. Surratt took John and Anna to Washington City to open her little boardinghouse on H Street, she needed every penny she could earn. She was in debt, for example, to Mr. Charles Calvert of southern Maryland for a few hundred dollars.

Among her boarders at the time of the conspiracy were Mr. and Mrs. John T. Holahan and their daughter, fourteen, and John Surratt's former schoolmate Louis J. Wiechman, big and soft as an overripe melon. He had studied for a while for the priesthood and failed, had taught school for a while, and now worked for the War Department at the Office of the Commissary General of Prisoners. He was a professional sneak, drawn to eavesdropping and gossip.

THE FIRST attempt to kidnap President Lincoln, from Ford's Theatre on January 18, was a fiasco. President Lincoln did not attend the theater that night, and the following morning Booth's little band scattered like minnows, believing, mistakenly, that the Government had been warned of the plot.

In February, Booth took new heart. He enlisted the final member of the conspirators. This man could be relied upon to kill on order. His name was Lewis Powell, but he had changed it to Lewis Paine. He was twenty years old, big and strong and silent and stupid. He had thick jet hair, a clean, handsome face, and the muscles of a circus strong man. When he talked he seemed to do so without moving his lips. His weakness was a rare and violent temper.

He had once seen John Wilkes Booth act and had been taken backstage to meet the star. He never forgot the courtly manners, the gracious attitudes, the born-to-rule air. Later, Lewis went off to war and fought hard and well. Wounded and taken prisoner at Gettysburg, he escaped and made his way eventually to Baltimore.

In the second week of February, Booth was in Baltimore to see Arnold and O'Laughlin about resurrecting the "capture" plot when Paine, lounging on a street corner, saw and hailed him. Booth remembered the big Southern kid who had once been brought backstage. They had a long talk about Paine's war record, and the actor bought him a suit of clothes and gave him money.

From that moment on, Booth had a faithful dog. Paine's feeling for the actor was slightly shy of idolatry. He would do as he was told without question. Paine was brought to the Surratt boarding-house and introduced as The Reverend Lewis Wood, Baptist preacher. There was much to see in Washington, but Paine was not interested. Every time he ventured on the streets to reach a rendezvous with Booth, he got lost. He complained that the streets were laid out crooked, that they did not intersect at right angles, and he could make no sense of them.

ON THE NIGHT of Tuesday, March 7, four weeks and three days before the crucial day, a small but important incident occurred at Ford's Theatre. Mr. Thomas Raybold, ticket seller, sold four

orchestra seats in advance to Thomas Merrick, the day clerk at the National Hotel. The policy of the theater, when seat holders did not show up by the end of the first act, was to permit the ushers to move less favored patrons up to the empty chairs.

Merrick and his party arrived at the start of Act Two, to find that their seats had been taken. Merrick was irritated. Raybold, distressed, offered to give the party box seats. He led them to Box Number 6. It was locked.

Raybold's embarrassment deepened. He took the party to the presidential box, which was a double box numbered 7 and 8. The party stopped in front of Box 7. The door was locked. Then Raybold tried the door to Box 8. Locked.

At this point, the ticket seller was angry at himself. He lifted his foot, aimed at the lock, and smashed. The door flew open. When the party had been seated, Raybold tried the lock and found that it was broken. In the future, the presidential box could be opened by anyone.

Mr. Raybold did not report it.

On a cold afternoon, Booth took Lewis Paine for a walk and showed him the White House. "He is right over there," Booth said, pointing. "If you really want to kill him, what I would do is just walk in, present my card and, when I was admitted, walk up to his desk and shoot him."

Paine made no answer. Booth said he lacked nerve. Still no answer. If you want to, said Booth, you can lie in wait in the bushes at the front of the White House lawn any evening and shoot him as he returns from his last daily visit to the War Department. Lewis Paine liked that idea. He said he would do it. This is the first time on record that the thoughts of John Wilkes Booth turned from capture to kill.

Paine waited in the bushes one night, and when he returned to the boardinghouse he told Booth that, although he had been close enough to have strangled the President, he had lost his nerve.

Sometime in March, the clerks in the office of the Commissary General of Prisoners were talking about the assassination plots

featured in the newspapers. This led Louis Wiechman, the gossipy boarder at Surratt House, to say that a group of "Secesh" people in his own boardinghouse were scheming to do away with the President.

Wiechman was worried when he found that his morsel of gossip quickly got out of hand. He was questioned by Captain Gleason of the office, who said that he would report the matter to Assistant Provost Marshal Lieutenant Sharp. Wiechman may have feared he was suspected as one of the plotters, for he now hurried to Captain McDavitt, U. S. Enrolling Officer, and went on record as having patriotically warned the nation of the impending peril. He told Captain McDavitt the names of the habitués of the boardinghouse, as well as the residents. It can be assumed that the information boiled upward toward Stanton, who was so chronically worried about assassination attempts that he was seeing plots where there weren't any. Is it too much to suggest that the United States Government was aware of John Wilkes Booth and his band, as well as the boardinghouse at 541 H Street, in mid-March of 1865? Is it too much to expect that Government officers would give this report more than casual attention, coming as it did from a trusted clerk in the War Department?

Mr. Stanton had caused the arrest of 38,000 persons in the war years, many on far flimsier evidence than the word of an army informer. It would have required only a nod to put Booth and his band, and the Surratts and their boarders, behind bars.

Nothing was done, although detectives would insist later that they had the Surratt boardinghouse under surveillance for weeks. The safest surmise is that Gleason's and McDavitt's reports were assessed and filed somewhere on the road up. They were never found.

TIME was running out. Whatever Booth was going to do would have to be done quickly. The South was collapsing and, if he didn't hurry, the war would be over and the Confederacy would be dead and there would be no cause to help.

He began to call his band together. On Friday, March 17, he sent John Surratt and Paine with two young ladies to Ford's

Theatre so that the conspirators could become acquainted with the premises. All sat in the President's Box. When the final curtain dropped, Surratt and Paine took the ladies home, and then proceeded to a private room at Gautier's Restaurant for a meeting of the whole band.

Booth introduced the conspirators. The Arnold-O'Laughlin wing had not met the Herold-Atzerodt-Surratt-Paine group until now. None of them seemed to have any heart for the "capture" of Lincoln, as Booth outlined it. Sam Arnold said the Ford's Theatre plan was too dangerous, and suggested that the capture could be arranged to take place in the suburbs. He had read that the President was scheduled to attend a matinee at the Soldiers' Home, and it would be much easier to stalk a carriage on a lonely road, beat the guards into submission and run off with Lincoln.

"Another thing," Arnold said. "If this isn't finished within a week, I am going to withdraw."

"Any man," said Booth slowly, "who talks of backing out ought to be shot."

Sam shrugged. "Two," he said, "can play that game."

Booth subsided. Most of the men favored Arnold's plan. At dawn the chief conspirator surrendered to his men.

That night Booth, who was appearing at Ford's Theatre, learned that some of the Ford troupe had indeed been booked to play a matinee at the Soldiers' Home on Monday.

It was a busy week-end. Surratt and Atzerodt rode to Surrattsville, where they met Herold and cached supplies with the alcoholic John M. Lloyd at the tavern he had leased from Mrs. Surratt. There were two army carbines with covers, a coiled length of hemp, a monkey wrench. The tavernkeeper said that he wanted nothing to do with guns. Union patrols, he said, had been searching the area for weapons and contraband. Surratt persuaded Lloyd to hide the stuff between the joists in a tiny room over the kitchen.

"We'll pick it up in a few days," he said.

At 2 p.m. on Monday, March 20, six men on horseback were waiting in a grove of trees a short distance beyond Seventh Street

and Florida Avenue. Booth explained the duties of each man. When the carriage was sighted coming around the bend, he and Surratt would ride out ahead and permit it to catch up with them.

The others were to ride behind the carriage and not try to overtake it until they saw Surratt grab a bridle and pull it to a stop. Then Paine would leap inside and subdue the President. Surratt and Booth would eliminate the coachman. Surratt would don the driver's coat and silk hat and drive the carriage. Booth and Paine would sit in the back with Lincoln. Arnold and O'Laughlin were to take care of mounted guards, if any. Atzerodt was to remain a few yards behind the scene, ready to respond to any call for help from the others. Herold was stationed at the tavern in Surrattsville, waiting with the "stuff." A boat was ready at Port Tobacco.

The conspirators were conversing in whispers when carriage wheels were heard. Booth dashed out into the road to peer around the bend, and came back shouting that this was the right one. In a moment they could see the shiny black vehicle coming along the sandy road.

The actor and John Surratt moved out. As the carriage came up, they parted so that they flanked the horses. Booth bent low to peer inside. There was one passenger, a smooth-faced man who looked startled. The actor motioned to Surratt to break away and the two rode back to the group. A violent argument broke out. Arnold and Surratt maintained that it was indeed the President's carriage and the fact that the President wasn't in it proved that the Government was aware of the plot and had sent the coach as a decoy. Federal cavalry would be coming at any minute. Booth argued that if they had patience Lincoln would be along soon.

In fifteen minutes the conspirators broke up in fear and cursing. The band would never again be at full strength. Arnold and O'Laughlin headed for Baltimore and promised each other to have nothing further to do with plots. Surratt quit in disgust.

ON THAT afternoon, President Lincoln had been ready to leave for the Soldiers' Home when Governor Oliver P. Morton of

Indiana walked in and said that one of his state's regiments was coming down Pennsylvania Avenue and wanted to present a captured Rebel banner to him. Would Mr. Lincoln come along? The President reluctantly agreed.

So, while Booth and his band were waiting on the road, the President was standing on the front steps of Booth's hotel, the National, telling an array of soldiers at parade rest that the war would soon be over and that they could then return to their families with the fervent thanks of the whole country.

A NOTICE appeared in the Washington *Star* on Monday, March 27, saying that the President and his family had reserved boxes at Ford's Theatre for Wednesday night. Booth saw the notice and wired O'Laughlin to come to Washington on Wednesday with or without Sam Arnold.

Neither showed up, but Arnold wrote a letter which was later to have fateful consequences. The key sentences were: "You know full well that the G——t [Government] suspicions something is going on. . . . Why not, for the present, desist. . . . Time more propitious will arrive yet. Do not act rashly or in haste. I would prefer your first query: 'Go and see how it will be taken at R——d [Richmond]' . . ."

Booth wrote no reply. The conspiracy was almost dead. Surratt had gone south to get a job sneaking Confederate dispatches to Canada. Sam Arnold was getting a job in a grocery store outside Fort Monroe, Virginia. Mike O'Laughlin was finished with plotting. Remaining, after successive failures, were Booth (who was now out of funds), Paine, Atzerodt and Herold. A brilliant actor, a stupid killer, a drunkard and a boy. That was the conspiracy, two weeks before the big day.

These setbacks to Booth's plans should have been as nothing compared to the one awful fact that there was no longer a Confederacy. It was, at this moment, in its death throes. Mr. Booth had no cause, no country. In a day or two the President would be in the place where Booth tried so desperately to bring him — Richmond.

But he would be there as a conqueror.

ON THE MORNING of Tuesday, April 11, Mrs. Surratt asked her boarder Wiechman to go to the National Hotel and ask Mr. Booth for the loan of his horse and buggy. Wiechman delivered the message and Booth shook his head. "I have sold the horse and buggy," he said. "But here are ten dollars. Go and hire one."

Wiechman accepted the money and walked up Seventh Street to Howard's Stable, where he rented a high narrow buggy and a black horse. At 9:30 a.m. he and Mrs. Surratt started off for Surrattsville, ten miles away.

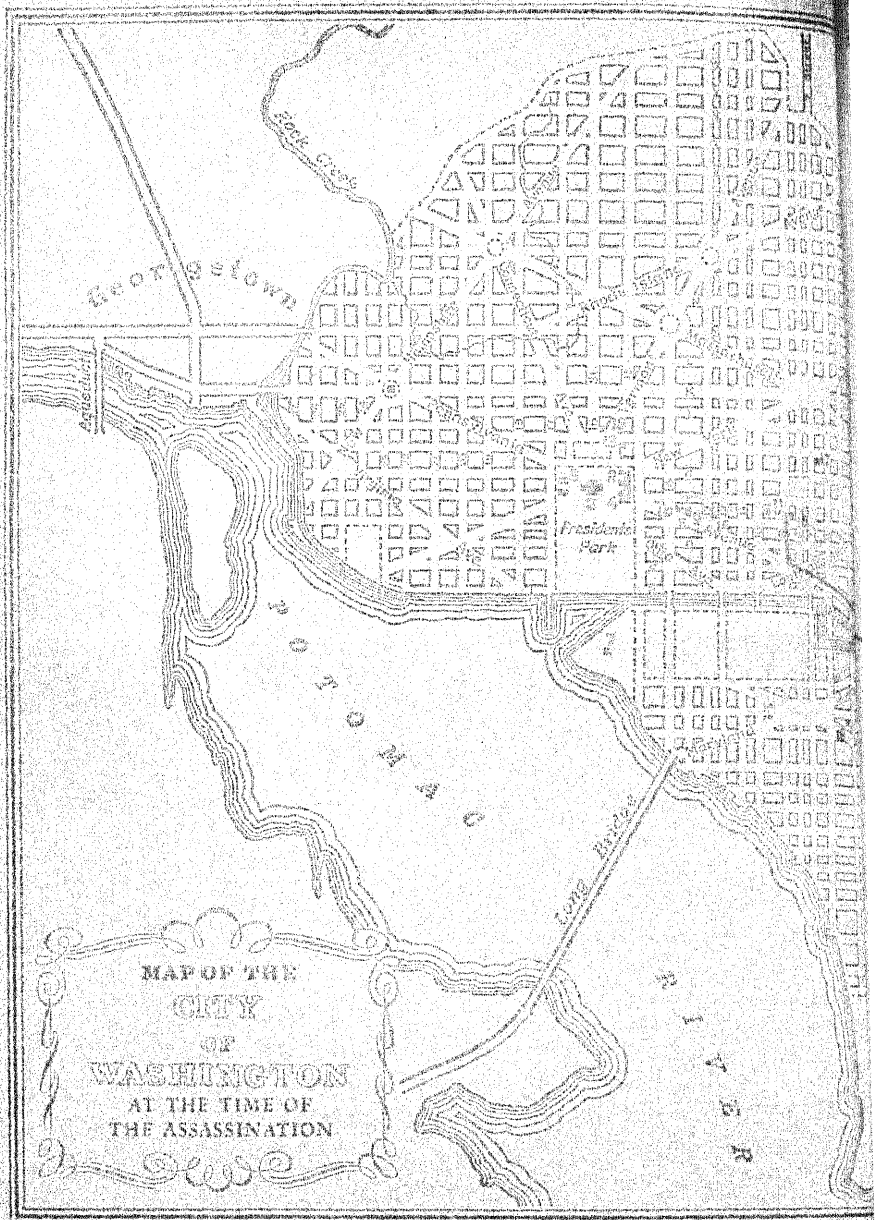
The widow was going to try to collect $479 and thirteen years of interest from a Mr. John Nothey, who had purchased seventy-five acres of farm land from her late husband. Mr. Calvert, to whom she owed money, was threatening to sue her. In addition, she carried a message from Booth to the tavernkeeper John Lloyd to have the "things" ready or the "guns" ready (the testimony varies). She failed to collect the money, but she delivered the message.

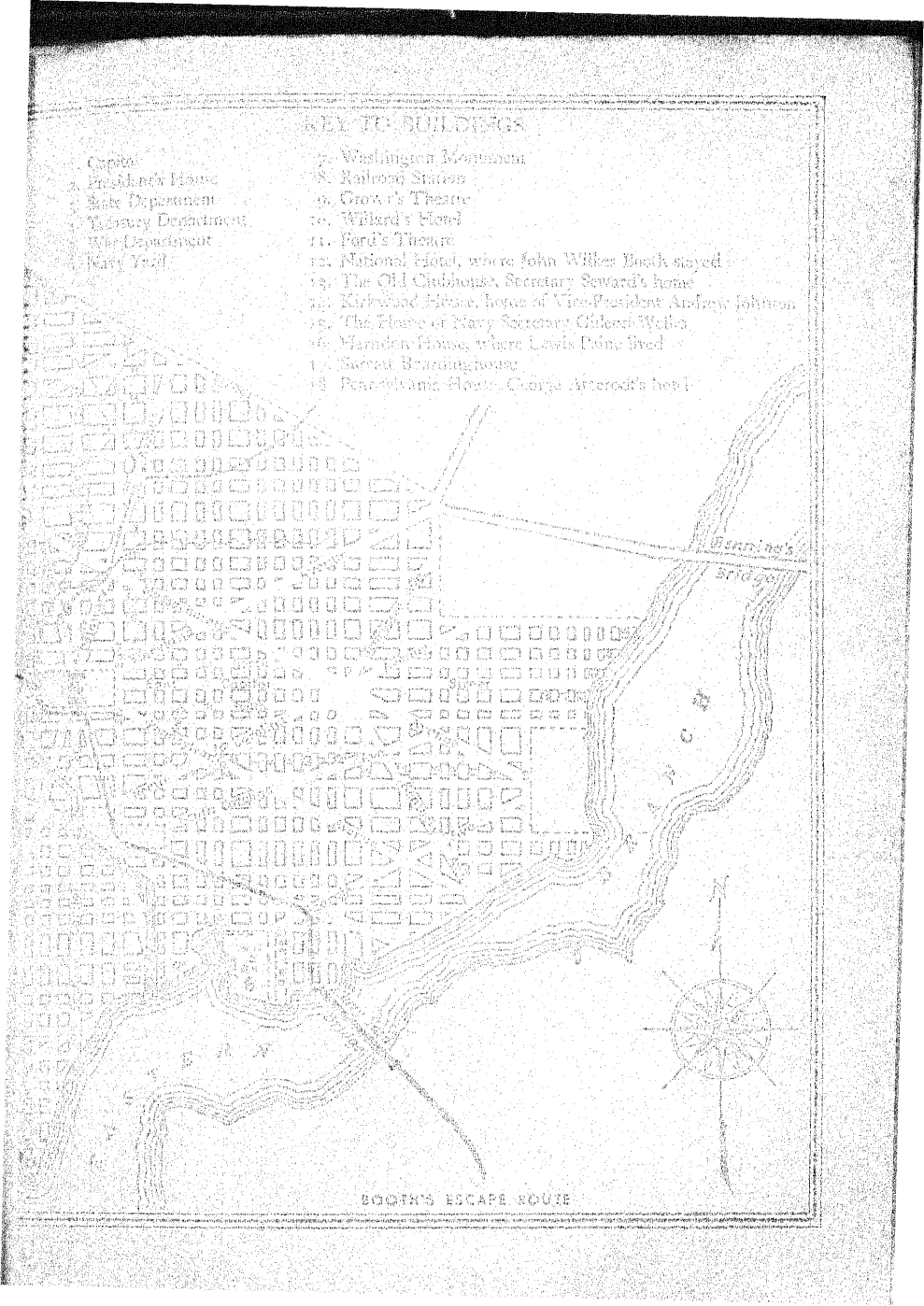
It is this message which makes Mrs. Surratt's trip so important because, three months from this day, she was going to be the first woman hanged in the United States and she would be hanged largely on the spirit and context of the message to Lloyd. The Government would declare that this message proved she was an active party to the John Wilkes Booth conspiracy.

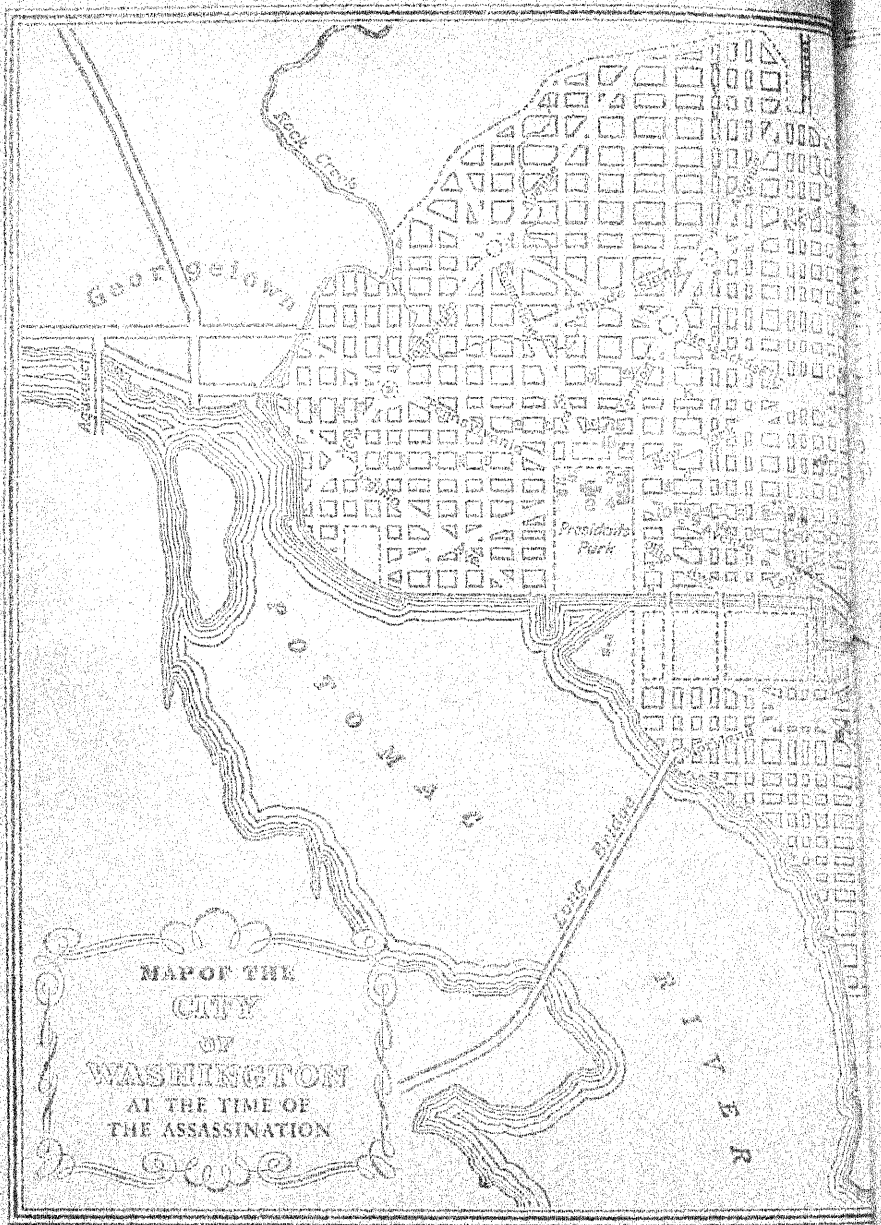
THURSDAY the 13th was a picture-post-card day. The sun was bright and buds laced the trees. Tulip beds along the Mall displayed colored chalices. Forsythia showed graceful yellow everywhere and a warm breeze from the south dried the mud in the roads.

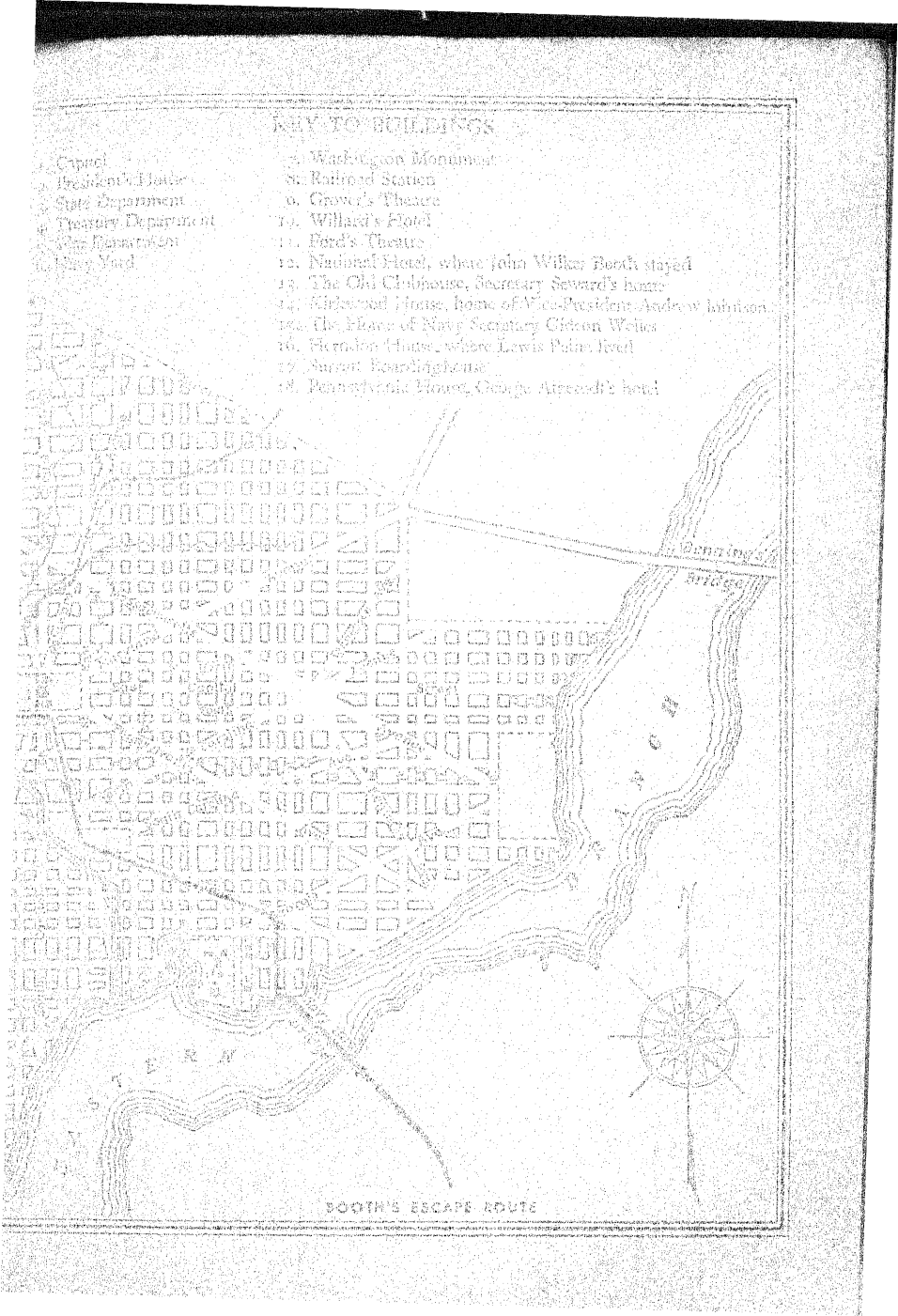
It was a nothing day to Booth, however, until he learned that General and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant were in Washington City. The news electrified him. The hero of heroes was in town and, Booth knew, the least that the Lincolns could do would be to stage a state ball or a theater party for him. This news was custom-made for an assassin. Somehow, somewhere, there would be a public appearance of the President and the Man Who Won the War. Booth asked nothing more than to learn when, and where.

The common gossip was that the Lincolns avoided state receptions because Congress had complained about White House


Georgetown
Rock Creek
Potomac River
Long Bridge
Anacostia River
Anacostia
Lafayette Square
President's Park
MAP OF THE
CITY
OF
WASHINGTON
AT THE TIME OF
THE ASSASSINATION


KEY TO BUILDINGS
1. Capitol
2. President's House
3. State Department
4. Treasury Department
5. War Department
6. Navy Yard
7. Washington Monument
8. Railroad Station
9. Grover's Theatre
10. Willard's Hotel
11. Ford's Theatre
12. National Hotel, where John Wilkes Booth stayed
13. The Old Clubhouse, Secretary Seward's home
14. Kirkwood House, home of Vice-President Andrew Johnson
15. The Home of Navy Secretary Gideon Welles
16. Herndon House, where Lewis Paine lived
17. Surratt Boardinghouse
18. Pennsylvania House, George Atzerodt's hotel
Benning's
Bridge
BOOTH'S ESCAPE ROUTE


Rock Creek
Georgetown
Potomac
Anacostia
River
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BOOTH'S ESCAPE ROUTE

expenses, and Mrs. Lincoln had huffily changed to inexpensive theater parties. If there was going to be a theater party, it would be held at Ford's or at Grover's. Booth looked over the bills for the week, and counted on Grover's Theatre because they were opening with *Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp,* a new dramatic vehicle, whereas Ford's had scheduled the old Laura Keene comedy, *Our American Cousin.* This play, he recollected, had not been well received even when it was new.

Booth walked up the Avenue to Grover's Theatre and checked with Mr. Hess, the manager. He learned that Hess planned to invite the President and Mrs. Lincoln to a gala performance the following night, which was the fourth anniversary of the fall of Fort Sumter. Booth then went upstairs to Deery's saloon, which was directly over the theater, and asked Deery to reserve the front right-hand box at Grover's for him. Deery chuckled and agreed. But why would one of the country's leading actors need a tavern-keeper to get box seats for him?

Because, said Booth, if I ask at the box office, Hess will feel impelled to extend the courtesy of the house, and I want to pay for this.

That night, while the people of Washington were enjoying a grand victory illumination, Booth rode around contacting Paine, Herold and Atzerodt. Atzerodt, weakest of the group, was at Pennsylvania House, a four-and-five-men-to-a-room hotel. Wilkes ordered him to take a room at Kirkwood House, and to spy on Vice-President Andrew Johnson, who had a two-room suite there. Booth assured each of his three men that this time there would be no failure because he planned to eliminate the President entirely.

Atzerodt looked shocked. Paine's reaction was casual. Herold was thrilled to be a part of such a shattering event.

At midnight Booth sat in Room 228 at the National Hotel and wrote a final note to his mother:

> I know you expect a letter from me. . . . But indeed I have had nothing to write about. Everything is dull, that is, has been until last night. Everything was bright and splendid. More so in my eyes if it had been a display in a nobler cause. But so goes the world. Might

makes right. I only drop you these few lines to let you know that I am well. . . . Excuse brevity; am in haste. . . . With best love . . .

I am your affectionate son, ever

John

Booth sealed it and prepared for the last good night's rest he would have.

The Morning Hours

Nine a.m.

MR. LINCOLN folded the newspapers and put them aside. He signed two documents, then nodded to the soldier, now standing inside the double door, to admit the first visitor.

Watching him, on this final morning, a person with prescience might have recalled certain things Lincoln had said which sounded as though he knew this day was coming.

"I do not consider that I have ever accomplished anything without God," he had said, "and if it is His will that I must die by the hand of an assassin, I must be resigned. I must do my duty as I see it, and leave the rest to God."

To Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* he had once said: "Whichever way the war ends, I have the impression that I shall not last long after it is over."

In one of the pigeonholes in his desk there was a bulky envelope. It was labeled "Assassination" and it contained eighty threats on his life.

THE SPEAKER of the House, Schuyler Colfax, came in. He was a good-looking, brown-bearded man who had the overly cordial

manner of the salesman. And what Mr. Colfax had to sell was always the same: himself. No notes were kept of this morning's discussion, but it is probable that they talked of Mr. Colfax's ambition to become a member of the Lincoln Cabinet.

The next visitor was Congressman Cornelius Cole of California. What his business was is not known, but he remained overly long. The President wanted to close his morning appointment list before eleven because he had called a Cabinet meeting for that time.

Upstairs, William H. Crook, the President's day guard, had relieved the night man in the corridor outside the Lincoln bedroom. He was a forthright, observant young man who had a honed sense of duty. On the 8 a.m.–4 p.m. shift, he was seldom more than a few paces away from the man whose life he guarded. Now he put the night guard's chair in a closet and turned off the gas lights in the hall.

He came downstairs, observing that the vultures had left, and checked the position of the military guards at the front gate, the front door and the door leading to the Executive Office.

The night guard, Alfonso Dunn, was standing on the front portico laughing at some of the victory celebrants who were reeling and roaring outside the White House fence. Crook joined him, half amused, and wrote later: "Everybody is celebrating. . . . A stream of callers comes to congratulate the President, to tell how loyal they have been, and how they have always been sure that he would be victorious. . . ."

And later: "Those about the President lost somewhat of the feeling, usually present, that his life was not safe. It did not seem possible, now that the war was over . . . after President Lincoln had offered himself a target for Southern bullets in the streets of Richmond and had come out unscathed, there could be any danger."

JOHN WILKES BOOTH returned to his hotel from the barbershop, smooth of skin and powdered. No one, not even the careful William H. Crook, would have suspected Booth this morning. Anyone who had pointed an accusing finger at him would have been branded hysterical or insane. Everyone, it seemed, knew and

admired him. He was the recipient of sunny smiles from strangers, and in his presence demure ladies became bold.

Perhaps one person might have worried about Booth had he seen him this morning. His name was Oram and, years before, he and Wilkes, as boys will, lay in the grass at Bel Air and dreamed about the future. "What I want," said Booth then, "is not to be so fine an actor as my father, but rather to be a name in history. I will make my name remembered by succeeding generations."

Another schoolmate joined them and asked how it could be done. Wilkes answered solemnly: ". . . You have read about the Seven Wonders of the World? Well, we will take the Statue of Rhodes for an example. Suppose that statue was now standing and I should, by some means, overthrow it. My name would descend to posterity and never be forgotten, for it would be in all the histories . . . and be read thousands of years after we are dead, and no matter how smart and good men we may be, we would never get our names in so many histories."

His friend Oram said: "Suppose the falling statue took you down with it? What good would all your glory do you?" And Wilkes propped himself on an elbow in the grass and smiled. "I should die," he said, "with the satisfaction of knowing that I had done something never before accomplished by any other man, and something no other man would probably ever do."

There was no Oram around this morning. No one to feel other than envy at sight of Booth.

At the War Department office, General Grant was finishing his work. He stood, short and squat, tunic open, cigar in mouth, eyes squinting as he approved the recommendations which would now go to Stanton.

When the work was done, he went into the Secretary's office. He told Stanton, as he had the day before, of Mr. Lincoln's wish that the Grants accompany them to the theater tonight, but that neither he nor his wife felt like attending. He explained that he wanted to see his two children.

Stanton's advice was not to feel bad; if the Grants did not go, the Lincolns would find someone else. He and Mrs. Stanton always

turned down presidential invitations to the theater, he said. He advised the General to wait until the Cabinet meeting at eleven, and then tell the President that he must decline. He added that Washington City was seething with intrigue, that in some ways it was as "Secesh" as Richmond, and that he had repeatedly asked Lincoln not to expose himself.

The General left the Secretary's office and sent a messenger to tell Mrs. Grant to arrange to leave tonight for Burlington.

Ten a.m.

IN THE White House, Lincoln was still seeing visitors, among them ex-Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire, newly appointed Minister to Spain. After serving sixteen years in the Senate, Hale had been defeated for re-election. Now he was grateful for an appointment to a $12,000-a-year job.

The ex-Senator had confided to friends that, in one way, he was glad to leave the country because his daughter Bessie had succumbed to the blandishments of an actor named Wilkes Booth, and he did not want an actor in the family. A long stay in Spain would help the girl to forget the man.

Lincoln advised Hale to keep Assistant Secretary of State Frederick Seward informed of his preparations to leave. The two men parted with a handshake.

The next visitor was John A. J. Cresswell, the man who was credited with keeping Maryland from seceding from the Union. Lincoln, catching his mood from the broad beams of sunlight coming through the east windows, sat back in his chair and slapped both hands on the polished oak arms.

"Cresswell, old fellow," he said happily, "everything is bright this morning. The war is over. It has been a tough time, but we have lived it out" — then his voice dropped — "or some of us have."

The two men chatted about the unique feeling of peace, and at last Mr. Cresswell got around to the favor he wanted to ask.

A friend of his had, through some inadvertence, enrolled in the Confederate Army. He was now a prisoner of war. Cresswell asked for his release.

Lincoln's long fingers held a letter opener and he studied it as he turned the instrument in his hands. The ebullience of a few minutes ago was gone.

"Cresswell," he said, "you make me think of a lot of young folks who once started out Maying. To reach their destination, they had to cross a shallow stream, and did so by means of an old flatboat. When they came to return, they found to their dismay that the old scow had disappeared.... One of the boys proposed that each fellow should pick up the girl he liked best and wade over with her. The masterly proposition was carried out, until all that were left upon the island was a little short chap and a great, long, Gothic-built elderly lady. Now, Cresswell, you are trying to leave me in the same predicament. You fellows are all getting your own friends out of this scrape, and you will succeed in carrying off one after another until nobody but Jeff Davis and myself will be left on the island, and then I won't know what to do.... How should I look lugging him over? I guess the way to avoid such an embarrassing situation is to let them all out at once."

Mr. Cresswell left, his mission unaccomplished. Afterward, other visitors came and left in rapid succession.

In a momentary lull, Mr. Lincoln sent a messenger over to Ford's Theatre to tell the manager that the President would require the State Box for the evening performance and to explain that General Grant would be in the party.

James R. Ford was in the front office when the messenger arrived. He heard the news with enthusiasm. Inside, a rehearsal of *Our American Cousin* was going on, and Ford had until this moment felt certain that Laura Keene and her company would be playing to an almost empty house on this final night of the engagement. Easter week was the worst of the year for theater business. And the worst night of the worst week was Good Friday.

The Fords' rival, Mr. Hess, had advertised that tonight Grover's Theatre would put on a monster victory celebration with lights

and special songs. Ford had nothing to compete with it except an old comedy which, without Laura Keene's infusing fire, would have burned itself out long ago. Now, miraculously, the evening had been saved. He bustled around the theater, passing the news to the actors on the stage, then hurried over to the new Treasury building to get some bunting with which to decorate the State Box. It was a coup to get the President of the United States on the poorest night of the year, but to get General Ulysses S. Grant was a major triumph.

Eleven a.m.

THE PRESIDENT sat at the small table between the big sunny windows chatting with the members of the Cabinet. This meeting, he knew, would set the tone for the future of the South — and, by that token, the future of the North. He was jovial in his greetings, standing to shake hands with General Grant, at which point the Cabinet members broke into applause. Everyone was present now except Seward, who was represented by his son; Andrew Johnson, who had not been invited; and Stanton, who often arrived late.

The President sat sideways at the head of the Cabinet table so that he could cross his legs, and opened the meeting by asking if there was any news of General Sherman. There was none, said General Grant. No news from Sherman meant no news of surrender from the last big Southern army, under General Joseph Johnston. The President said that he had a feeling that there would be news before the day was out.

With the arrival of Stanton, Lincoln channeled the talk toward reconstruction. He said that he needed suggestions regarding the best procedure to follow in the South. He was going to be saying those words, in different form, several times in the next three hours because he had no intention of adjourning this meeting until the skeleton outline of reconstruction had been erected.

The talk turned to the leaders of the Confederacy and what to do with them. "I think it is providential," the President said, "that this great rebellion is crushed just as Congress has adjourned, and there are none of the disturbing elements of that body to hinder and embarrass us. If we are wise and discreet we shall reanimate the states and get their governments in successful operation, with order prevailing and the Union re-established before Congress comes together in December. . . ."

That came from his head. This, from his heart: "I hope that there will be no persecution, no bloody work after the war is over. No one need expect me to take any part in hanging or killing these men, even the worst of them. Frighten them out of the country, open the gates" — throwing up both arms and fluttering his fingers — "let down the bars, scare them off, enough lives have been sacrificed."

WILKES BOOTH stopped at the National Hotel desk and asked the clerk to post the letter he had written to his mother. Then the young dandy walked out, turned up Pennsylvania Avenue, nodding pleasantly to the hero worshipers, and at Tenth he turned right to Ford's Theatre, where he would pick up his mail.

The Ford Opera House (its formal name) was on the east side of Tenth Street between E and F. It was a three-story red brick building, now eighteen months old. It had five arched doorways. The one in the center led to the ticket office and the lobby. To the north of the theater — toward F Street — was Ferguson's Restaurant. To the south, the E Street side — was Taltavul's saloon. The street was unpaved and muddy, and a wooden ramp squatted in front of the center door of the theater so that ladies alighting from carriages would not get wet feet and soiled hems.

The actor stepped into the manager's office. He picked up his mail, said hello to the youngest Ford brother, Henry Clay. They were talking theatrical gossip when James J. Gifford, the stage carpenter, walked in and Ford told him that President Lincoln and General Grant were coming to the theater tonight and to please have the stagehands remove the partition between Boxes 7 and 8.

Booth masked his surprise. He went out in front of the theater and sat down on the granite step to look at his mail. A passer-by noticed him laughing heartily at something he was reading.

A few minutes later, he was inside the theater and upstairs.

The boxes at Ford's Theatre were actually on stage; no part of them hung over the orchestra section. There were two lowers on each side of the theater, and two uppers. The State Box, or President's Box, was at the right-hand side of the theater. The two halves of this box, numbered 7 and 8, both upper, were separated by a partition of one-inch pine.

When the President was going to use the box, the partition was removed. As a sign of respect, no other boxes in the house were sold on those occasions.

When the Lincolns were present, only the door to the rear box, number 7, was used. Outside the boxes was a small unlighted hallway. Behind it was a small white door which faced the patrons in the dress circle. Outside this door, the President's guard sat on a chair with his back toward the door.

The stage was shallow and a patron sitting forward in Box 8 often looked down on the back of the head of the actor. The distance between the ledge of the upper boxes and the floor of the stage was eleven feet.

Under the stage was a passageway in the form of a T. This was necessary to connect both sides of the stage and to leave a subterranean passage for the musicians, who played their music in the space between the footlights and the front row of the orchestra. Gas jets in light-colored bowls were bracketed around the walls of the theater and over the stage.

At stage right (the left side of the theater from the orchestra) was the Green Room. Actors sat here before cue time. To the rear of the Green Room was a door leading to the back alley. On the far side of the alley were the back yards of houses which faced Ninth Street, and also up toward F Street a few Negro shanties with earthen floors and heavy curtains instead of front doors.

Booth entered the door of Box 7—the rear box—and sat watching the rehearsal on stage.

He was acquainted with almost every line of *Our American Cousin.* With no gas lights on, he was cloaked in daytime gloom and he sat watching, thinking, timing his plans for tonight. Looking from the ledge of the box to the stage, he knew that he had made bigger leaps in *Macbeth.* He could not plan to run back through the dress circle because the moment his act was accomplished there would be bedlam in the theater. Besides, he would have to stab the guard outside the little white door in case of challenge. It would be better for him to jump to the stage, run across toward the Green Room, and out the back door to a waiting horse.

The actors on stage were in the second scene of the third act, the part where the English mother, Mrs. Mountchessington, who has been trying to marry her daughter off to Asa Trenchard, the American, learns that he is not rich.

"I am aware, Mr. Trenchard," she says, outraged, "that you are not used to the manners of good society, and that alone will excuse the impertinence of which you have been guilty." She flounces off stage, leaving Asa Trenchard (Mr. Harry Hawk) alone on the boards. He watches her go, then grunts. "Don't know the manners of good society, eh?" he says. "Wal, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal—you sockdologizing old man trap!"

This bit always drew one of the biggest laughs of the play. Booth watched and did not laugh. At this point Harry Hawk would be alone on the stage. Mrs. Muzzy, who played the English mother, would be on her way to her dressing room. Laura Keene would be in the wings, waiting for a cue. The stagehands would be backstage storing the flats from the previous scene.

John Wilkes Booth was thinking, if one can hazard a guess, that if the curtain rose at 8 p.m. (and it usually did) then this particular scene should be on at about 10:15.

Booth had seen enough of the rehearsal. He went out into the little corridor and examined the doors. Then he walked downstairs and out of the theater. There was a lot to be done, and precious little time in which to do it.

Tonight, he would pull down the Colossus of Rhodes.

The Afternoon Hours

Twelve noon

AT NOON Washington City was quiet. The sun was obscured and the view was heavy with haze. Many of the Government employes had gone to Good Friday services or gone home. Few pedestrians were on the streets. It was noisy only at the foot of Fourteenth Street, where the thunder of army wagons could be heard on the loose planking of Long Bridge, coming home from war.

Booth walked up to G Street, and across to Seventh, and stepped into Howard's Stable. He asked the stableman to deliver his big one-eyed roan to the stable behind Ford's Theatre. Then he walked across the Mall to Pumphrey's Stable, and asked for a sorrel which he had been renting for six weeks past. The stableman said that the sorrel was out but he had a fine roan mare for hire, a little nervous perhaps, but a good fast riding horse.

He brought her out and Booth studied the animal. She was young, about fourteen hands high, and Booth liked her skittish bearing. "Have her saddled at four o'clock," he said. "I'll be back."

George Atzerodt, new resident at Kirkwood House, had not been in his room on the second floor since early morning, but David Herold had been in it to leave clothes and weapons.

Atzerodt spent most of his time drinking at the bar and trying to be disarming. He asked so many questions of the bartender and the few customers that he excited suspicion. Where, he wanted to know, is the Vice-President's room? Does he have a guard? Could any citizen knock on the door and have a chat with him? A man in his position doesn't carry firearms, does he? Does

the Vice-President stay home at night? Would you say that he was a brave man or a coward? Ever see any soldiers around him?

The men at the bar studied Atzerodt, and the stupid face squeezed into a smile, and they relaxed. The man was obviously a drunken outlander.

Booth went back to the National Hotel to dress. He got out boots and new spurs and a black suit with tight trousers, for riding; a good black hat, a small pocket compass, his gold timepiece, a small brass derringer, a gimlet and a long sheathed knife which could be stuck inside his trousers.

There would be no more failures. Lincoln would die tonight, or Booth would. Or perhaps both. The last possibility did not frighten him. The actor was aware that the chances were that he would not get away. Pulling the huge statue down with him was the important thing. The only thing.

If he worried, it was over his fellow conspirators. No one knew better than he that his band of irregulars were buffoon assassins: a sniveling alcoholic, a giggling boy and a brainless automaton. Wilkes doubted if Atzerodt would even approach Vice-President Johnson. However, Johnson was the least important of the men he wanted to kill. Seward was more important, and Paine would really kill the man . . . if he could find him.

In the past weeks, Booth had tried to make Washington City comprehensible to Lewis Paine, but the confused ex-soldier could not distinguish uptown from downtown, north from south or right from left. Like a hound dog, he would have to be taken to the bird and pointed. Davey Herold would do that. Booth had to use two men to get one sick man killed, and a third man to get nothing done. Only he, John Wilkes Booth, had the courage, the intelligence and the patriotism to slay the Despot Himself.

The plan called for meeting afterward on the road to Surrattsville. In cool assessment, Booth was pretty sure that even he would not be on the road to Surrattsville tonight. Getting into the State Box was a formidable problem; getting out of the theater and away was going to be almost impossible.

For a while he toyed with the idea of taking Paine with him to Ford's Theatre. Paine could be assigned to kill General Grant

while Booth was dispatching President Lincoln. But he dropped the plan quickly. It would be infinitely more difficult to get two persons into that box; and it would be more than twice as hard to get two people out of that theater. Besides, if Paine assassinated Grant and Booth failed to kill Lincoln, the actor would be a fool in history. His theatrical sense warned him not to share billing with anyone. He would do it himself — Lincoln with the gun, Grant with the knife.

One p.m.

In President Lincoln's office, the meeting had passed its second hour, and the President was pleased to note that, except for minor differences of opinion, his Cabinet seemed to be agreed that if the South were helped to get on its economic feet the effect would be to enhance the welfare of the North. No one, including Lincoln, desired to spoon-feed the South and, by the same token, no one wanted to heap additional punishment on the defeated states. Stanton was for a sterner peace than the President, but the difference between the men was not beyond bridging.

Lincoln observed with satisfaction that, when Secretary of the Navy Welles offered his views about the course to be followed in Virginia, Secretaries Stanton and Dennison agreed and the others said nothing in opposition. Thus, even among men who distrusted each other, Lincoln had harmony on this one day.

In front of Kirkwood House, Vice-President Johnson, hands thrust in pockets, scowled at the unnatural quiet of the city and walked into the hotel. He went to his rooms, closed the door and sat reading.

A short time later George Atzerodt came in with a bundle and walked up the curving staircase to his room. He deposited huge pistols under the pillow on his bed and a knife under the sheet. Glancing at the things left by Herold, he went back downstairs,

where he asked the room clerk to point out the Vice-President's room, and asked where Johnson was right now.

He was told that the room was directly below his and that the Vice-President had just come in. George Atzerodt's reaction was to straighten up in shocked surprise and step into the bar. He was there only a short time when he paid for his drinks and walked out.

A few minutes later, the Vice-President glanced at his timepiece, got up and put his coat on and left. He had an appointment with the President, who had suggested that Johnson "drop over" early in the afternoon.

Johnson walked to the White House. At the gate, two guards recognized him and snapped to attention. He nodded without smiling and walked on in. At the front door, he was met by a colored doorman, a soldier with carbine and bayonet, and the President's personal guard, Crook.

He went upstairs to the big doors of the President's office. The soldier posted there said that the Cabinet meeting was still going on, and the President had not had his lunch. Mr. Johnson said he would stroll around until the President was ready.

Two p.m.

THE EARLY editions of the afternoon newspapers were being hawked on the streets and the Washington *Evening Star* announced the presence of General Grant and Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln at Ford's Theatre that evening.

Two hundred and fifty miles to the north, the *Whig Press* of Middletown, New York, published the news that President Lincoln had been assassinated. No one found out the sources of this "news," or why the editor published it without checking with the authorities.

In this time of poor communications, it is puzzling that at the same hour the people of Manchester, New Hampshire, were buzzing with rumors that President Lincoln had been shot. In

far-off St. Joseph, Minnesota, forty miles from the nearest telegraph office, men gathered on the street and in horrified tones discussed the news that President Lincoln had been killed by an assassin.

THE CABINET meeting was drawing to a close. The President said that he guessed they would all have to wait until later to hear from General Sherman. He got to his feet, the other men arose and the meeting was adjourned.

General Grant thanked him for the opportunity of attending a Cabinet session and then brought up the matter of the theater party. He seemed embarrassed as he said that Mrs. Grant would be sorely disappointed if their visit to the children was delayed any further. In fact, she planned to take the evening train to Philadelphia.

Lincoln, looking down on his diminutive hero, joshed him and said that there would be plenty of time for the children, and reminded him that the people would get great pleasure out of seeing the man who had won the war. Grant subsided. He had not said, "I will not go." Nor had he followed Mr. Stanton's suggestion and said: "You should not go. Your life may be in danger."

The groups were still chatting in the room when Grant's aide brought him a note. It was from Mrs. Grant and it said that she hoped that the General would not delay their departure on the six o'clock train. This was exactly what Grant needed to face up to the President. He showed the note, and said that he *must decide* not to remain in Washington. The President understood that this was a final decision.

Lincoln left the office at about 2:20 for lunch with Mrs. Lincoln. There is no record of their conversation but it is almost certain that he told her what he would say to others later in the day: Grant is not coming. I do not feel like going to the theater tonight and, if it were not for disappointing so many people, I wouldn't.

AT THE Surratt house on H Street, Wiechman — who had been permitted to leave his office to attend church services — was writ-

ing a letter in his room. There was a knock. It was Mrs. Surratt. She said that she had just received a letter from Mr. Charles Calvert, telling her that she would have to go to the country again if she expected to collect her $479 from Mr. Nothey.

Wiechman said that he would drive her and she gave him ten dollars to get a horse and buggy. Just as Wiechman was leaving the house John Wilkes Booth walked in. The inquisitive boarder was burning to remain and listen, but he had no excuse to do so. He hurried around the corner to Howard's Stable, got a horse and buggy and trotted the horse back to the boardinghouse. He hitched the horse and started up the steps which led to the upstairs sitting room, just as Mrs. Surratt came out. She told him that Booth had left, and she was ready to go. As he turned back to the buggy she said: "Wait, Mr. Wiechman. I must get those things of Booth's."

"Those things of Booth's" turned out to be a package about the size of a saucer, covered with brown paper and tied with string. She put the package on the floor of the carriage between her feet.

"I must be careful," she said, as Wiechman swung the horse out on H Street and started toward the Navy Yard Bridge. "It's brittle. Glass. I do not want it to get wet."

Wiechman wanted to hear more. What was in the little package? Why did Booth stop by to give it to Mrs. Surratt? The widow did not say, and yet she had not tried to hide it. If the contents were of any consequence, why had she almost forgotten it?

Booth walked to Herndon House and upstairs to the corner room where Lewis Paine lay on the bed, hands clasped behind head. Booth told him the plan for tonight and advised him to check out of the room. The actor's one-eyed horse would be in the little stable behind Ford's Theatre. They set a time for meeting, and Booth left.

An actor came out to the box office and told Henry Clay Ford that the rehearsal was over and that his stagehands could start decorating the State Box. Ford went backstage and ordered Ned Spangler and Jake Ritterspaugh to help him. Joseph Burrough

came along too. Burrough was called Johnny Peanut because, when the theater first opened in 1863, that's what he used to sell out front.

The partition was removed and Boxes 7 and 8 were one. A cane chair was placed outside the little white door for the President's guard. The red upholstered rocker reserved for the President was installed at the rear of Box number 7, in a corner where the President would be hidden from the audience by a drape. Two sofas were brought up from below stage and dusted and set in the front of the boxes, facing the stage. These were for the ladies. An upholstered chair was set between them, for one of the gentlemen. Three good chairs were placed along the back of the boxes.

Ford got on stage and climbed a ladder to drape big American banners across the billowing façades of both boxes. Between the boxes he set a Treasury Department regimental flag. In the space over it he hung a small steel engraving of George Washington.

Then he stepped down and surveyed his work. Spangler and the others said that it looked impressive. Ford checked all the furniture in the two boxes to be sure that every piece was clean and properly placed. Then he opened the door to 7, and closed it. He opened the door to 8, and closed it. Everything was in order.

Ford's Theatre was ready.

Three p.m.

CHAPLAIN Edward D. Neill, of the First Minnesota Infantry, walked into the President's office. In the doorway behind him stood a colonel from Vermont. The chaplain was now a clerk at the White House, and had used his favorable position to persuade Lincoln to brevet the colonel a brigadier general.

Now, finding the office empty, the chaplain took the liberty of examining the papers on the President's desk, trying to find the signed commission. He was shuffling papers as quietly as possible when the President approached, also as quietly as possible. Neill looked up, startled. Mr. Lincoln was chewing on an apple.

Neill explained that he was looking for the signed commission, that he was sure the President wouldn't mind. As he was talking, Mr. Lincoln pulled the bell cord.

"For whom are you ringing?" the chaplain said nervously.

There was a hint of humor in Lincoln's eye as he grabbed the reverend by the lapel, leaned close and in a stage whisper said: "Andrew Johnson!"

The chaplain said, "I will come in again," and left.

Lincoln was irked by Johnson's acting like a one-man proletariat. Johnson never tired of telling of his humble beginnings. He was a swamp snob and to Lincoln, the penniless log-cabin rustic, it was anathema.

The Vice-President had sought interviews with the President and he worried when, on pretexts, they were denied. When Congress adjourned, he had stayed on in Washington City, hoping to heal whatever sore was on Lincoln's mind. Now he had been sent for. He felt relieved when the Chief Executive grabbed his hand and shook it vigorously and called him "Andy." The two sat on opposite sides of the desk and talked for twenty minutes. The probability is that Lincoln timed this interview so that he could tell Johnson what was in his mind about the brand-new problem of reconstruction and what the Cabinet had agreed upon. When the Vice-President left the White House, he looked less tense than when he entered.

At the outer gate a colored woman, sick with hunger, staggered up to the sentry box. A soldier stepped out, swung his rifle diagonally across his body and said solemnly: "Business with the President?" The other guards laughed.

"Before God," the woman whispered. "Yes."

"Let her pass," one of the guards said, still laughing. "They'll stop her farther on."

The woman staggered across the drive and up to the White House porch. At the big doors a second soldier barred her. With what seemed to be her final energy, the woman darted under his arm and ran straight through the long corridor and upstairs, her face a study in dark agony. The presidential office guard stood before the door with his rifle in both hands.

Breathing hard and crying, she begged: "For God's sake, please let me see Mr. Lincoln."

"Madam," the guard said, "the President is busy. He cannot see you."

She may have screamed, or sobbed, because the door opened and through her tears she saw the President of the United States.

He was smiling. He said: "There is time for all who need me. Let the good woman come in."

When he had seated her beside his desk, it took time for her to compose herself. She told him her name, Nancy Bushrod, and how many babies she had and that her husband's name was Tom. Both of them had been slaves on a plantation outside of Richmond. When they had heard about the Emancipation Proclamation, they had run away and come to Washington.

In thankfulness to Mr. Lincoln, Tom had enlisted in the Army of the Potomac, leaving Nancy in a little shack with twin boys and a baby girl. For a while his pay kept coming regularly every month; then it stopped. Nancy had walked the streets of Washington City, looking for work. All the colored people in the world, it seemed to Nancy, were looking for work in the city. She started to cry again. Would the President please help her about Tom's pay? She would not have come, but there was no other way.

"You are entitled to your husband's pay," Mr. Lincoln said. "Come this time tomorrow and the papers will be signed and ready for you."

As Mrs. Bushrod told about it later, she said: "I couldn't open my mouth to tell him that I was going to remember him forever and I couldn't see because the tears were falling."

When he had escorted her to the office door, he said: "My good woman, perhaps you will see many a day when all the food in the house is a single loaf of bread. Even so, give every child a slice and send your children to school."

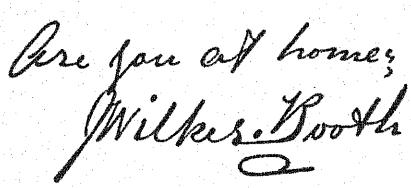
Then, as Nancy Bushrod looked back at him, she said he bowed "like I was a natural-born lady."

AT ABOUT this time John Wilkes Booth was entering Kirkwood House to discuss with George Atzerodt final plans for the assas-

sination of Johnson. The clerk told him that Atzerodt was out.

The actor had a drink at the bar, and got an idea. If Lincoln was killed tonight, Johnson would become President. Booth had little faith that Atzerodt would succeed in killing Johnson and, if the Vice-President lived, the affairs of the Union would be carried on with little impediment. Booth had to make sure of hurting Johnson's chances of becoming President.

He asked the desk clerk if the Vice-President was at home. The clerk said no. Booth asked for a card. On it he wrote:



Dont wish to distrust you
Are you at home?
J. Wilkes Booth

The actor had never met Johnson, but after the assassination of Lincoln the Vice-President would have a difficult time explaining this note from the archconspirator. It might look as though Johnson was the prime mover in a plot to make himself President of the United States.

History often hinges on small accidents. A short time after the actor left, Colonel Browning, secretary to the Vice-President, came into the lobby of Kirkwood House. He stopped at the desk for his mail.

The desk clerk had orders to put Johnson's mail into Colonel Browning's box because the colonel did all the sorting and reading for the Vice-President. When Browning got to his room and began to read the missives, he came to Booth's card and assumed that the actor had left it for *him*. Years before, he had once been introduced to the actor. Browning was pleased that Booth remembered him, and made a mental note to find out if he was starring in a play in Washington. If so, Browning wanted to return the compliment.

Four p.m.

THE PRESIDENT had finished a day's work. He had no more afternoon appointments and he got up slowly from his desk, put his glasses in a case and went to the little closet on the north side of the office to wash. His face looked tired. He wet a brush and stroked it through his black scraggly hair.

Mrs. Lincoln wanted to go for a carriage drive. Well, maybe it was a good idea. A relaxing drive could erase fatigue without mitigating the warm feeling that a great deal had been accomplished on this day.

AT Pumphrey's Stable, Booth's mare was ready. The actor walked her in a circle, watching her feet. She was a good mare, solid, with a deep chest and nimble legs. She looked as though she had stamina, and between Ford's Theatre and the far side of the Navy Yard Bridge she was going to need every ounce of it.

He mounted and pulled on one rein. She turned around in her own length. He sat easily and well, and the mare moved out of the stable lightly. He walked her up Sixth Street to Pennsylvania Avenue. Then he gave her a touch of the spurs and she went into a run. He pulled her down to a trot, pleased that she moved fast without urging. He rode to Grover's Theatre, tied her to a hitching post and went into the manager's office, but it was empty. Going upstairs to Deery's tavern, he asked for a bottle of brandy and some water. Deery said that he had Booth's box seats for tonight and Wilkes said he would pick up the tickets later. He drank deeply, and as he left he spun a cart-wheel coin on the bar.

Downstairs, the manager's office was still empty. Booth sat at the desk and drew paper and an envelope from the pigeonholes. The earlier letter left with his sister Asia stated his motives for the *capture* of the President. He needed a new one to explain murder.

Across the envelope he scribbled, "Editor, National Intelligencer." He wanted no confusion about the perpetrator of this deed, or why he did it. The words came swiftly. He had devoted time and effort, he wrote, to effect the capture of this man; now he had to change his plans in order to give the South one more chance. He expected criticism of his act, but someday, when sectional anger had cooled, time would justify him.

Then Booth did an ignoble thing. Instead of signing it with his name alone, he committed his friends, his fellow conspirators, to his deed. He wrote: "J. W. Booth—Paine—Atzerodt—Herold." He knew that this put the noose around their necks, and he felt no compunction. If the others withdrew from the plan, from this moment onward, they had been named as parties to it and, if Booth killed the President, the others would hang for it.

He sealed the letter and put it in his pocket. The next stop was to be Ford's Theatre.

THE PRESIDENT sent word to Mrs. Lincoln that he would be at the War Department for a few minutes and, when he returned, would be ready to go out with her.

Crook walked with him to the War Department. On their way they approached a group of celebrants who were in the violent, argumentative stage of drunkenness. Crook went ahead, to clear walking room for the President. After the two men had passed by, Mr. Lincoln said: "Crook, do you know, I believe there are men who want to take my life." This surprised the guard, because it was the first time that the President had initiated such a topic. "And I have no doubt they will do it," he added.

"Why do you think so, Mr. President?"

"Other men have been assassinated. . . ." and the voice trailed off.

"I hope you are mistaken, Mr. President."

"I have perfect confidence in those who are around me," the President said firmly. "In every one of you men. I know no one could do it and escape alive. But if it is to be done, it is impossible to prevent it."

At the War Department, the President greeted Mr. Stanton and asked if there was any news from Sherman. There was none.

"I am looking for someone to go to the theater with me tonight," Mr. Lincoln said. "Grant says that he cannot attend, and neither can you. May I have your man Eckert?" He referred to Major Thomas T. Eckert, chief of the War Department Telegraph Office, a man who was big all over, with an outsized chest and arms and even ears. He looked like a cartoon of an off-duty policeman.

Stanton said he was sorry, but that he had important work for Eckert that night. The President rubbed his fingers through his chin whiskers and said that he thought highly of Eckert as a bodyguard because once, when the major complained about the quality of a shipment of iron pokers, Lincoln had seen him take them one after another and break them over his arm.

Mr. Stanton said that Eckert's work could not be put off. He warned again against Lincoln's attendance at the theater.

"Very well," said Lincoln. "I shall take someone else, but I should have preferred Major Eckert."

Crook walked beside the President back to the White House and Lincoln talked about the theater party. "It has been advertised that we will be there," he said, "and I cannot disappoint the people. Otherwise, I would not go. I do not want to go."

YOUNG David Herold had expected to find Booth at Taltavul's tavern or at Ford's Theatre and, missing him at both places, he dogtrotted to Naylor's Stable, where he asked for a horse he had reserved earlier. The stable foreman, John Fletcher, was an Irishman who suspected that everyone was trying to "do" him.

"Until eight o'clock only," said Fletcher.

"How much will it cost?" asked Herold.

"Five dollars for the evening."

"All right. Give me the roan mare, the one I had before."

Fletcher brought her out and gentled her to the front of the stable. When David mounted the mare, he asked how late he could stay out.

"No later than eight," John Fletcher said. "Nine at the most."

Fletcher didn't trust this boy. In fact, he didn't trust any of the young fellows in town. How many times even the best of them had stolen good animals on him. Or, if they kept the animal

after hours, they would drop it off at another stable and in the morning Fletcher would have to make a tour of dozens of stables around the city. Well, he'd give this boy until 9 p.m. on the dot, and then he'd go out looking for him.

Five p.m.

THE PRESIDENT of the United States came out on the White House porch with Mrs. Lincoln. He studied the sky and buttoned his coat. The coachman helped Mrs. Lincoln into the barouche, and as the President followed she said: "Would you like someone to come with us?"

"No," he said, with a twinkle of gallantry, "I prefer to ride by ourselves today." He nodded to Francis Burns, the coachman, and the sparkling carriage, drawn by the matched blacks, started out of the gravel driveway. Two cavalrymen fell in behind.

On this drive the President was in rare humor and passers-by heard Mrs. Lincoln's laughter peal from the coach. They went along at a spanking trot, the President raising his silk hat when groups of citizens hailed him from the walks.

"Dear husband," Mrs. Lincoln said, "you almost startle me by your great cheerfulness."

"And well may I feel so," he said, becoming serious. "Mother, I consider that this day the war has come to a close." He patted her hand. "We must both be cheerful in the future. Between the war and the loss of our darling Willie, we have both been very miserable."

Mrs. Lincoln stopped laughing. The death of her son Willie, three years before, was a cut deeper to the bone than the war had been. For a while both were silent. As they passed the Capitol, they saw the marching troops, the cadres of dejected prisoners, the end of something they had lived with for a long time. The city was now relaxed. It was gay and careless and silly and in fettle.

The President, who rarely spoke of his own future, told Mrs.

Lincoln that he wanted to get on with reconstruction in the South, complete his term of office and then perhaps take a trip to Europe with his family. After that he would return to Springfield, Illinois, and possibly resume law practice. It would be nice if someday they could buy a prairie farm along the Sangamon.

"I never felt so happy in my life," he said. It was a simple, unequivocal statement.

And she, a woman tortured by fears, said: "Don't you remember feeling just so before our little boy died?"

At the Navy Yard the President got out, stretched his legs and was induced to walk the deck of the monitor *Montauk*. Then he stepped back into the carriage, and they were off for the return trip.

Booth walked his mare up Pennsylvania Avenue to Fourteenth Street, where he saw John Matthews, the second actor who had refused to become a part of the scheme. Of him Wilkes had said: "He is a coward and not fit to live." Now he reached down to shake Matthews' hand, and dismounted. They talked of plays and bookings. Matthews was flattered to be seen on terms of intimacy with Booth, and he did not bring up the matter of the plot.

Booth had a small favor to ask. Would John deliver a letter for him tomorrow? He drew it from his pocket. It was a note to the editor of the *National Intelligencer,* he said, and he would do it himself except that he expected to be out of town tomorrow. Matthews would be glad to do it—could do it now.

Oh, no, said Booth. The letter contained an item of news and it must be delivered tomorrow, preferably just before noon. Matthews took the letter and put it in his pocket.

Booth rode up to Fifteenth Street, turned and started back slowly, just as a carriage pulled away from Willard's Hotel. Two cavalrymen rode behind the carriage. The actor knew that none but Government personages used outriders, so he spurred his horse and passed the carriage, which was headed toward the Capitol. As he flew by, he looked into the carriage and saw two women. One was Julia Dent Grant. A woman friend was seeing her off at the station. On the box, up front with the coach driver, was General Grant.

The actor reined his horse some distance ahead, and then turned back toward the carriage at a walk. He stared hard at Grant, and he looked at the ladies with such intent that both of them remembered the strange, wild-eyed rider later. He went back to Willard's corner, and said to a man: "Wasn't that Grant?"

The man nodded.

"I thought he was going to Ford's tonight, with Lincoln."

The man shrugged. "Somebody said he's going to Jersey."

The only railroad running between Washington and Burlington, New Jersey, was the Camden & Amboy. There were four northbound trains daily. The one chosen by the General was the slowest. It left at 6 p.m. and arrived at 7 a.m., involving a long wait and change of trains at Philadelphia. If the Grants had remained at the Willard overnight, they could have boarded the 7:30 a.m. express and would have been in Burlington at 2:58 p.m. after seven and a half hours of travel and a night's rest.

THE SURRATT carriage arrived at John Lloyd's tavern. Mrs. Surratt alighted and asked for John Lloyd and learned that he was appearing in court at Marlboro that day. She asked about Mr. Nothey and was told that no one knew his whereabouts. He had been telling neighbors that he had tried to settle the widow's claim of $479, but that she didn't want to reach an agreement. This outraged Mrs. Surratt. She asked Wiechman to write a letter for her to Mr. Nothey, threatening suit unless he settled with her. It was posted at once.

At 5:30, according to the trial records, John Lloyd came home from court drunk. Mrs. Surratt said to him, "Mr. Lloyd, I want you to have those shooting irons and some whisky ready. There will be parties here tonight who will call for them." She handed the small, paper-wrapped package to him. "Hide this, for tonight."

After Wiechman and Mrs. Surratt started back to Washington City, Lloyd hid the package upstairs with the other stuff, first peeling the wrapping paper off and taking a look. Field glasses.

ON A SIDE STREET, Booth saw George Atzerodt on foot. He dismounted and held a whispered conference. He told George that

the "elimination" of Lincoln was easier now, because Grant had just left town. It was important, he said, that Atzerodt make his attack on the Vice-President at 10:15 p.m. or as near that time as possible, because the other attacks would also be made then. If all hands finished at the same time, they would meet on the far side of the Navy Yard Bridge almost simultaneously.

Atzerodt, drunk and brazen, said that he had "enlisted" for capture, not murder. Booth called him a coward. Atzerodt started to whimper and said that he had spent a day investigating the Vice-President and he had learned that Mr. Johnson was a brave man. Booth told him that he had gone too far already and might as well go the rest of the way.

Wishing him luck, the actor got on his mare and rode off. Atzerodt watched him go, probably wondering if he would ever see him again. He knew that he would go back to Kirkwood House, and that he would drink and debate whether he had the nerve to kill Johnson and then, finding that he had not, he would drink some more and curse himself for being a coward.

He walked to a stable where he had a horse. He had rented the horse at one stable, and left it at another. He considered this necessary to a complicated plot. He rode past Ford's Theatre, which he studied as he went by, and shook his head. He turned and passed the Patent Office and tossed away a bowie knife in a sheath. He continued to ride aimlessly, pausing at different saloons and having one or two drinks in each one.

Six p.m.

THE DAY was dying the way it was born — gray. The warm breeze had spent itself and flags hung lifeless, cloaking the staffs with color. The smoke from an outbound train hung like a crayon apostrophe behind the Capitol.

Many of the principals of this day were at this time on the road. Mrs. Surratt and Wiechman were bound for Washington

City. The President and his lady were being driven back to the White House. Atzerodt was riding aimlessly. David Herold was looking for Booth. Paine was wandering, waiting for the proper time to meet his idol and pick up his horse. Stanton was homeward bound from his office.

John Wilkes Booth dismounted at F Street between Tenth and Ninth, opened an old billboard gate leading to the alley behind Ford's Theatre, led his horse inside and slammed the gate.

At the back door of the theater he shouted "Ned!" and in a moment Ned Spangler came out with James Maddox, another stagehand. Booth asked Spangler to stable his mare and he asked for a strong halter because she had been known to shred her halter and run away. Spangler said he had a good one in the property room and yelled to Jacob Ritterspaugh to get it.

When the mare had been given water and feed, Booth invited the stagehands to Taltavul's for a drink. At this hour only Spangler, Ritterspaugh and Maddox were in the theater, and a ticket seller was out front. The conspirator invited everyone except the ticket man.

Booth had the respect of the stagehands because he was friendly without being condescending. At the tavern he joked with them and asked if they had to be on stage soon. They said no, that the scenery had already been set up. He then said that he had an errand to do, but before he left he bought a bottle of whisky for the men and advised them to "drink up." He went back through the alley and the underground passage and up onto the stage. There he picked up a 1½-by-3-inch pine board which had held a music stand. A single brace of gas lamps was burning over the stage and in the feeble light he could see the flag-draped box.

He hopped off stage onto the orchestra floor and walked toward the back of the theater and up the stairs to the dress circle. He moved down the aisle to where a cane chair sat before the white door leading to the State Box. Here he paused, looked around and saw no one. He went inside the white door and closed it behind him. He struck some matches and tried to brace the pine board between the inside of the door and the rear wall of Box 7, which jutted into the corridor. The board was about half an inch too long.

He had a penknife, but it would take an interminable time to whittle the board and time was of the essence. Again he braced it against the door — just above the knob — and tried to fit it against the wall. Where it jammed, he gouged plaster from the wall, holding a kerchief below to catch the fragments. In a few minutes he had a niche into which the board fitted.

Tonight, anyone who tried to follow him from the dress circle would find that the harder the door was pushed, the more firmly wedged the board would become. If he had to stab the guard outside the white door, there might be an outcry and pursuit. The board was important. He removed it and set it in a dark corner near the door.

Next he inspected the box. As he had known all along, the lock on number 8 was broken. He stood between the President's rocker and Mrs. Lincoln's sofa and studied the jump to the stage. It wasn't much. If he stood on the ledge and jumped, it would be about eleven feet, but if he swung himself over the ledge, hung on by his hands and dropped, it would be shorter and safer.

He went out into the little corridor, leaving one of the box doors open, and crouched to study the position where the President would be sitting. Then he closed the door and drew a spiral-fluted gimlet with a wooden handle from his jacket pocket. The door had two recessed panels, a top one and a bottom. He set his gimlet against the lower right-hand corner of the upper panel and drilled a small hole. He pressed his eye against it, and he had a hazy view of the upper part of the rocker. From his pocket he took a penknife and enlarged the hole. Again he stooped and looked. This time he had a good view of the spot where the President's shoulders and head ought to be.

Scooping up the shavings and the grains of plaster, he dropped them into his pocket, went downstairs and out the back way and got his mare. This time, instead of going up to F Street and opening the gate, he swung the other way in the T-shaped alley and went out Ninth Street. He rode back to the hotel to eat and rest.

BACK at the White House, the Lincoln family had supper together. Robert said that he had an evening out scheduled and did

not know whether he could use the tickets to Grover's Theatre. This reminded Mrs. Lincoln that she had invited a young engaged couple, Clara Harris, the daughter of Senator Ira Harris of New York, and Major Henry R. Rathbone, to come with them to the theater. She said that they would pick up the couple at the Harris home en route to Ford's Theatre. The President received the news in silence and nodded.

A HUNDRED miles to the south, Marshal Ward Hill Lamon, the presidential worrier, drove through Richmond. The President was in his thoughts and there is no doubt that, as he saw the burned-out shells of once fine homes and the bitterness in the faces of passers-by, he shuddered when he thought of the President walking these streets a week ago.

He knew that Lincoln believed in portents and dreams, believed that it had been written in the stars that he was to be cut off at the height of his fame and power and that he must die at the hands of an assassin. It was obvious to Lamon that Lincoln's dreams preyed on his mind.

Once the President had said that dreams were part of the "workmanship of the Almighty." He had told Lamon that, before he came to the White House, he was lying on a couch in Springfield and he glanced up at a mirror and saw two images of himself: one glowing bright, one ghastly in death. The meaning, he said, was decipherable: he would be healthful in his first term of office, and death would overtake him in his second.

As he rode through the streets of Richmond, Lamon thought of the dreamer back home in Washington City. He loved Lincoln, and he knew that if the President went outdoors on any of these nights he would never forgive himself for not being at his side.

FORD'S THEATRE opened. The sun was setting at 6:45 and John Peanut came out front and lit the big opaque gas globe in front of the main entrance. A line of people stood before the box office. Spangler, Maddox and Ritterspaugh sat out on the stone step in back of the theater, pleasant in the glow of whisky and wondering if Booth would come back later and buy some more.

The Night Hours

Seven p.m.

In the White House, William H. Crook stood outside the President's office with hands clasped behind his back. He was angry. He had worked the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. tour of duty as Lincoln's bodyguard today and he was waiting for the night man to relieve him. John F. Parker was now three hours late.

This had happened before. Parker's record as a member of the Washington City police was bad. No one seemed to know who had selected him as a bodyguard for the President.

When at last Crook saw him walking down the corridor, he choked down his anger and merely said: "The President is going to the theater tonight. You will go with him. Are you armed?" Parker said he was, and patted his pocket. Crook told him that the President was going to take an engaged couple to the theater, which meant that there would be no room in the presidential carriage for Parker. He had better leave the White House fifteen minutes ahead of time, and wait for Lincoln at Ford's.

The President appeared at the office door for a moment and Crook said: "Good night, Mr. President." The President looked at him and said: "Good-bye, Crook." On the way home, the guard thought about it. The President had always said "Good night, Crook."

The night guard assumed his post outside the office. John F. Parker was thirty-four, married, father of three small children. He had served three months with the Union forces in 1861, and had been accepted as a policeman on the Washington metropolitan force early in 1862. Since then he had been frequently in trouble.

He had been charged with using vile and insolent language to a superior officer, with insulting a woman who asked for police protection, with drunk and disorderly conduct in a house of prostitution, with sleeping in a streetcar while on patrol duty. These and other charges against him had been dismissed.

This is the man who drew the 4 p.m. to midnight shift as personal guard to the President on April 14, 1865.

BOOTH finished eating and went to his room and loaded his pistol. It was a brass derringer, a single-shot firearm with a short barrel. Though it could almost be hidden in a lady's hand, it fired a good-sized lead ball, almost a half inch in circumference. He patted the sheathed knife stuck in the waistband of his trousers to assure himself that it was there.

From his trunk he pulled a false beard, a dark mustache, a wig, an oversized plaid muffler and a make-up pencil — all to be used later. When all of the accouterments of assassination had been inspected and counted, he dropped on the bed. It is hardly possible that, with the small amount of time left for inactivity, he slept. He probably watched the shadows on the ceiling and listened to the chatter of the merrymakers on the street below.

No one knows when it first occurred to him to utter a Latin phrase after the murder. He decided to use as his bid for immortality the phrase *"Sic semper tyrannis,"* the motto of the State of Virginia: "Thus always to tyrants."

At 7:45 he got off the bed, packed his impedimenta and at the last moment decided to take two big revolvers. The others might need them. Downstairs he walked across the lobby, elegant and poised as always, and nodded to the desk clerk. "Are you going to Ford's Theatre this evening?" he said.

"I hadn't thought of it," the clerk said.

"Ah," said Booth, wagging a finger, "you should. You will see some fine rare acting."

He went out into the darkness and got his impatient mare. There was a fine mist in the street and the lighted dome of the Capitol looked like an apparition viewed through a frosted window. The streets were crowded.

In the White House, the President was still working. Speaker of the House Colfax was in the office discussing a trip he had scheduled to the Rocky Mountains. The President said he would write out a few remarks, which Colfax might quote, about the important part the people of the West, with their gold and silver mines, would play in the coming peace.

Colfax, after a pause, said that many people had been worried about the President exposing himself to violence in Richmond. Lincoln said: "Why, if anyone else had been President and gone to Richmond, I would have been alarmed too; but I was not scared about myself a bit."

The conversation turned to the theater party tonight. Lincoln asked if the Speaker would like to join them. Mr. Colfax declined, with thanks.

Out in the front corridor, John F. Parker chatted with his friend Tom Pendel. Pendel had been one of the four original presidential guards, but had been advanced to the post of White House doorman. Parker had filled the vacancy.

"John," said Pendel, "are you prepared?"

Parker looked confused. Prepared for what? Alfonso Dunn, the second doorman, spoke up: "Oh, Tommy, there is no danger."

"Dunn," said Pendel, "you don't know what might happen." He had always been a careful policeman and he knew that Parker wasn't. "Parker," he said, "you start down to the theater and be ready when he reaches there." Parker, half amused, half blank, walked out into the night. "And you see him safe inside," said Pendel.

An usher brought word to Mr. Lincoln that former Congressman George Ashmun was waiting outside. The ex-Congressman did not have an appointment. The President studied his timepiece. It was 7:50.

"All right," he said. "Show him in." He asked Colfax to wait outside. The President could hardly refuse Mr. Ashmun a minute or two: he had presided over the 1860 convention which had nominated Lincoln, and in Congress he had been fairly loyal to the President's policies.

Ashmun said that a client of his from his native Massachusetts

had a sizable cotton claim against the Government. Would Mr. Lincoln appoint a commission to examine into the merits of the case? The President listened with unconcealed irritation. "I have done with commissions," he said angrily. "I believe they are contrivances to cheat the Government out of every pound of cotton they can lay their hands on."

The ex-Congressman gasped. "I hope," he said, "that the President means no personal imputation."

Lincoln's manner changed. "You did not understand me, Ashmun. I did not mean what you inferred. I take it all back."

Ashmun was mollified.

Eight p.m.

At 8:05, Mrs. Lincoln, in a pretty bonnet with tiny pink flowers, and a low-necked white dress, stood in the office doorway pulling on gloves and said: "Would you have us be late?"

The President asked Ashmun if he would mind coming back again in the morning, when there would be plenty of time. Ashmun agreed. The President took a card from his vest pocket and wrote on it in a large, shaky hand:

Allow Mr. Ashmun
& friend to come in
at 9 a.m. to mor
row

A. Lincoln
April 14, 1865

He got his silk hat, brushed his hair with his hand and, with Ashmun, joined Colfax, Mrs. Lincoln and Noah Brooks, the newspaperman, on the front porch. In a last-minute afterthought,

he told Colfax that Senator Sumner had a gavel which the Confederate Congress had used and which Sumner wanted to present to Mr. Stanton. "I insisted that he must turn it over to you," Lincoln said. "You tell him for me to hand it over."

His mind was still far from the theater. As the footman helped Mrs. Lincoln into the closed coach, he said to the assemblage: "Grant thinks we can reduce the cost of the army establishment at least half a million a day, which, with the reduction of expenditures of our navy, will soon bring down our national debt to something like decent proportions, and bring our national paper up to par, or nearly so, with gold—at least, so they think."

He was "unusually happy." That was the reaction of Noah Brooks and Tom Pendel and Colfax. Not because of the theater engagement, but rather because he was now President of the *United* States. He waved to all, and as he stepped halfway into the carriage Isaac N. Arnold, another old friend, came out of the dark of the driveway, yelling to the President. Arnold had neglected his own seat in Congress to preach Lincoln up and down the state of Illinois and as a result had been defeated.

The President backed out of the carriage and listened to Arnold's confidential whisper with head cocked. Then he said: "Excuse me, now. I am going to the theater. Come and see me in the morning."

Up on the box, Forbes, the President's valet and footman, folded Mr. Lincoln's heavy plaid shawl over his arm. He nodded to the coachman. The horses stepped forward, and gravel crunched under the wheels as the sixteenth President of the United States looked back at the White House and waved to his friends.

THE CONSPIRATORS held a final meeting—probably outdoors, on horseback. The location is not known. Final agreements were reached. Booth would go to Ford's Theatre alone. At 10:15 he would strike. Afterward he would head for the Navy Yard Bridge, where, if the other actions were properly synchronized with his, the band should meet. Failing that, each man should proceed to Surrattsville and wait at the tavern where Lloyd had the guns and the binoculars. After a brief rest, the party would pro-

ceed to Port Tobacco and, once on the Virginia shore, head south.

Atzerodt was to knock on the door of the Vice-President's hotel room — also at 10:15 — and, when the door was opened, shoot him. Herold was to guide Paine to Seward's home and lend whatever assistance might be necessary to dispatch the Secretary of State. Afterward Herold would guide Paine to the Navy Yard Bridge. If each of the parties struck at almost the same moment, an alarm spreading from one place would be met by an alarm coming in the opposite direction, and this was bound to confuse the Government into thinking that the city was full of assassins.

Herold suggested that he and Paine could get into Seward's house with less trouble if they claimed to have a prescription from Seward's physician, Dr. Verdi. Booth agreed that this was a good idea. He closed the meeting by announcing that he had written a letter to a newspaper, explaining the high patriotic motives of all concerned and that they were "all in this thing together." This canceled all ideas of deceit on the part of the conspirators. It would be of no use now to think of *not* participating in the murders because Booth had committed them to the over-all plot and, if one Government official was killed, all would hang.

Booth shook hands all around, and wheeled his little mare away. The band broke up into missions.

THE PRESIDENT'S carriage pulled up in front of the home of Senator Ira Harris. Miss Harris and Major Rathbone, flushed with excitement at the unexpected honor, stepped into the carriage. They faced the Lincolns, riding backward. Clara Harris was dark and lovely. The major, who affected mutton-chop whiskers and a walrus mustache, was tall and slender and dignified. He was not in uniform, and he was not armed. The ladies talked animatedly on the short ride to the theater.

Around the wooden ramp in front of Ford's, a few soldiers on leave sat or stood, waiting to see the President and General Grant. Inside, Act One was being played to an almost capacity house, and a small queue of patrons still waited for tickets at the box office. In the row of small houses across the street people stood at windows, waiting to see the Chief Executive. A policeman

stood in front of the main entrance to the theater, keeping the pedestrians moving. As the President's carriage drew up to the theater, the two cavalrymen who had been riding behind as escort swung back up Tenth Street to return to their units. They would come back after the last curtain, to escort the President home.

Against the wall of the main entrance, John F. Parker leaned. He had completed his inspection of the State Box. He had seen the chair that he was to occupy outside the white door, and he knew that from there he could not see the play.

It was 8:25 when Lincoln arrived. Forbes, the President's valet, helped the party to alight. Parker did not move from his position yet. His duty, as he saw it, was partly done. He had examined the premises and found them free of danger to the President. Now he would lead Mr. Lincoln into the theater.

Mr. Buckingham, the ticket taker, bowed deeply to one and all. Parker led the way up the stairs. On stage, Laura Keene, as Florence Trenchard, was in a scene with Lord Dundreary. He had mentioned a window draft, a medical draught and a bank draft.

"Good gracious!" said Miss Trenchard. "You have almost a game of draughts."

As the audience chuckled, patrons in the dress circle began to stand and applaud and, on stage, Miss Keene stopped the action and applauded vigorously. The entire theater stood. The President of the United States was leading his party down the side aisle, through the white door and into the State Box.

Miss Keene ad-libbed: "The draft has been suspended."

Professor Withers, the conductor, raised his baton and the band swung into "Hail to the Chief." Miss Harris and Major Rathbone could be seen taking their positions toward Box 8. Mrs. Lincoln was moving to the front of the box. The figure of the President was partly hidden by drapes.

The band finished with a flourish, and everyone sat to prolonged applause. Forbes, in the rear of the box, leaned over to whisper to the President about the shawl. Mr. Lincoln said that he did not want it at the moment. Forbes remained a little while, then left the box and went downstairs.

Parker, sitting at his post outside the white door, looked at the

faces in the dress circle and watched two army officers come down the side aisle and take the last empty seats in Row D. Several times Parker arose from his chair and peered around the edge of the wall at the action on stage.

MR. STANTON decided that he would pay a call on Seward before retiring. It was 8:30 and he could be back in a half hour. At The Old Clubhouse he found the Secretary in great pain. He could not bear to have his arm moved.

Mrs. Seward and the children had agreed to sit certain watches with the Secretary. The mother sat the early watch from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. Miss Fanny Seward sat with her father from 9 p.m. until 11 p.m. Young Major Augustus Seward was with his father the rest of the night. In addition, Secretary Stanton had assigned two convalescent soldiers to assist the family.

The Secretary of War tried to be cheerful, but Seward groaned so much that it is doubtful if he heard what was said. Stanton left.

JUST BEFORE nine o'clock, John F. Parker became bored. He got up, pushed his chair against the dress-circle wall and walked out of the theater. At the corner, he saw Burns dozing in the driver's seat of the President's carriage.

"How would you like a little ale?" Parker said.

Burns awakened and said it was a good idea. As the two started down to Taltavul's, Forbes came out of the theater and joined them.

Nine p.m.

INSIDE the theater there were 1675 persons, a fashionable audience of handsomely dressed ladies and stalwart men, many in uniform. The President noticed that Major Rathbone had taken Miss Harris's hand in his. He reached and found Mrs. Lincoln's hand and held it at the side of the rocker. After

a moment she leaned close to him and whispered: "What will Miss Harris think of my hanging on to you so?"

"Why," the President said, "she will think nothing about it."

When the lights went up after Act One, the audience studied the colorfully decorated box. Three persons could be seen plainly; the fourth sat in shadow.

AT Surratt House Louis Wiechman and Mrs. Surratt ate a late supper after their trip to Surrattsville. Wiechman talked with Anna Surratt, who was in a teasing mood. The upstairs bell rang and Anna hurried to answer it. When she came back to the basement, she volunteered no information about the caller and the big boarder was piqued. (Later, at the trial of the conspirators, he implied it was Booth.) Wiechman went to bed at 9:45. The people of Surratt House were indoors for the night.

AT THE White House, S. P. Hanscom, the editor of the *National Republican,* called. Hanscom was a small, persevering man who had been so ingratiating in his dealings with Lincoln that little by little he was permitted to walk into the President's office without appointment, at any hour of day or night.

He was surprised to find that, had he read his own newspaper today, he would have learned that the Lincolns were at Ford's Theatre. He sat with a few members of the staff and gossiped. A sergeant came in from the War Department with a sealed message for the President. The staff assumed that it contained news of Johnston's surrender. It would have to be delivered to the theater at once.

Hanscom said that he would deliver it and the message was given to him. He arrived at Ford's at intermission time and went upstairs to the dress circle. Outside the little white door he found the President's valet, Forbes, who had returned, sitting against the wall. The editor said he had an important message for Mr. Lincoln, and Forbes thumbed him inside. The message was delivered (when he entered Box 7, Miss Harris turned around in alarm) and Lincoln thanked him cordially. The editor went home.

The message was of small consequence: a request for an appoint-

ment by two men who had been prominent in the Confederate States of America. The answer could wait until morning.

AT The Old Clubhouse, Dr. Verdi, Seward's physician, called on his patient. When he emerged from the bedroom, he told the family that the patient was doing as well as could be expected. He had left instructions with the sergeant about a sedative. The Secretary of State was now dozing and the doctor would suggest no more visitors tonight.

AT 9:30, a mare picked her way lightly through the dark alley behind Ford's Theatre. Her dainty feet rang on the stones as she approached the single light at the stage door.

Booth dismounted and shouted, "Spangler!" The only answer he got was a roar of laughter from inside the theater. Up high in the flies, John Miles, a Negro, heard the call and through the tall back window could see Booth standing outside with his horse. Booth called twice more. Miles, looking downward, saw Ned Spangler, who shifted scenes on the same side of the theater as the President's Box, leave his post and run to the door.

Still watching, Miles could see Booth hand Spangler a bridle rein. Spangler was gesturing toward the theater, probably pleading that he was too busy to take care of the horse. Miles saw him go back into the theater and come out with Johnny Peanut. Peanut sat on the stone step and held the mare.

Booth came in, removing gauntlet gloves, bowing and smiling to fellow actors. From the wings he peered across the stage to the President's Box, but Miles could see by the way he shaded his eyes that the powdery haze prevented him from seeing much.

At about this moment, President Lincoln told Mrs. Lincoln that he felt a chill. She wanted to get the shawl that Forbes had brought, but instead the President stood and put on his black coat.

The utility man, J. L. Debonay, was standing beside Booth, watching the action on stage, and Booth asked if he could cross behind the set. "No, Mr. Booth," said Debonay. "The dairy scene is on. You will have to go under the stage."

Booth went down into the subterranean passage. Overhead, he

could hear the creak of the boards, the mumble of actors, the shrill laughter of women in the audience. He came up on the other side of the stage, peered at the packed house and went out through the side alley to Tenth Street.

He had time.

DOWN ON E Street, Atzerodt decided to again pick up the horse he had rented in one stable and boarded in another. He walked into Naylor's Stable and asked John Fletcher for his mare. Atzerodt had been to this stable several times with David Herold, and Fletcher didn't like either of them. Still, this mare didn't belong to him, so he brought her out, saddled and bridled her.

He said: "I would not like to ride that mare through the city tonight. She looks so skittish."

"Well," Atzerodt said, "she is good on retreat."

"Your friend," said Fletcher as he helped the customer to mount, "is staying out very late with our horse."

Atzerodt slapped his heels into the horse and said: "He'll be back after a while." He headed to the point where E slices into Pennsylvania Avenue, then he turned left.

Fletcher had a shrewd thought. Atzerodt might lead him to Herold. He started to follow on foot. At Twelfth Street on the Avenue he saw Atzerodt dismount, hitch his horse and go into Kirkwood House. Fletcher waited. In a few minutes the carriage maker came out, wiped his mouth on his sleeve and remounted. He went off up Twelfth Street, in no apparent hurry, and Fletcher decided to go back to the stable and hunt for Herold later.

BOOTH went into Taltavul's and asked Peter Taltavul to set a bottle of whisky and some water before him. This was unusual, and Taltavul remembered it, because the actor usually asked for brandy. Booth drank. Farther down the bar, Forbes had rejoined Burns and John F. Parker for a few more drinks. A man gaily intoxicated lifted his glass to Booth and said: "You'll never be the actor your father was."

The conspirator smiled. "When I leave the stage," he said quietly, "I will be the most famous man in America."

Ten p.m.

GEORGE ATZERODT trotted his horse up Tenth Street and looked at Ford's Theatre as though fascinated. Then he rode back again to Kirkwood House to kill the Vice-President but his feet carried him into the bar and he drank and looked at the clock and drank some more.

Booth came out of Taltavul's and stood talking to Lewis Carland, the theater costumer, and James J. Gifford, the stage carpenter. A singer named Hess came down from F Street and asked what time it was. Someone looked at the lobby clock and said, "Ten." Hess was scheduled to go on, in concert with a young lady and another man, just before the last scene and sing "All Honor to Our Soldiers," a new song composed by Professor Withers.

Another man walked up to join the conversation. He was Captain William Williams of the Washington Cavalry Police, an admirer of John Wilkes Booth. He invited his idol into Taltavul's for a drink, but Booth declined. "Keene," he said, "will be on stage in a minute and I promised to take a look for her."

He bowed and left the group and walked to the theater. Absentmindedly the ticket taker held out his hand, and Booth said in mock shock: "You will not want a ticket from me?"

The ticket taker laughed. "Courtesy of the house," he said. The actor looked at the lobby clock. It read 10:07. He turned and bounded up the stairs to the dress circle. As he reached the top, slightly ahead of schedule, he heard the lines on stage and knew that he had about two minutes. Asa Trenchard walked on stage and Mrs. Mountchessington said: "Ah, Mr. Trenchard. We were just talking of your archery powers."

Asa, played by Harry Hawk, drawled: "Wal, I guess shooting with bows and arrows is just about like most things in life. All you have got to do is to keep the sun out of your eyes, look straight,

pull strong, calculate the distance, and you're sure to hit the mark in most things as well as shooting."

Booth looked at the little white door and saw the empty chair. Confused, he looked at patrons in dress-circle seats as though wondering which one was the President's guard. For the first time he realized that he was going to get into that box with no trouble; no challenge, no fight, no stabbing. He was going to be able to walk in as though Lincoln had been expecting him.

Moving to the white door, he stood with his back to it. He saw some of the nearby faces glance briefly at him. A wave of laughter swept the theater and attention reverted to the stage.

Mrs. Mountchessington had just learned that Asa Trenchard was not a millionaire. "No heir to the fortune, Mr. Trenchard?"

"Oh, no," he said.

"What!" young Augusta shrieked. "No fortune!"

"Nary a red," said Asa brightly. "It all comes from their barking up the wrong tree about the old man's property."

Now was the time. In a few seconds Asa would be alone on the stage. Booth opened the door and walked into the darkness. The door closed behind him. He found the pine board, held it against the inside of the door and tapped the other end into the niche he had carved for it in the wall. Interference could not come from that direction.

He moved toward the door of Box 7. A tiny beam of light squeezed through the gimlet hole in the door and made a dot on the opposite wall. He could still hear the actors faintly.

"I am aware, Mr. Trenchard," said Mrs. Mountchessington in her frostiest tone, "that you are not used to the manners of good society — "

The conspirator pressed his eye against the gimlet hole. He saw the high back of the horsehair rocker and the silhouette of a head above it. The head barely moved. The universe seemed to pause for breath. Then Trenchard said: "Don't know the manners of good society, eh? . . ."

Booth did not wait to hear the rest of the line. The derringer was in his hand. He turned the knob. The door swung inward. Lincoln, facing diagonally away toward the left, was four feet

from him. Booth moved along the wall closest to the dress circle. The President had dropped Mrs. Lincoln's hand and there was a little space between their chairs. The major and his Clara were listening to the actor on stage:

"Wal, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, you sockdologizing old man trap!"

The derringer was behind the President's head between the left ear and the spine. Booth squeezed the trigger and there was a sound as though someone had broken an inflated paper bag. It came in the midst of laughter, so that some people heard it and some did not. The President did not move. His head inclined toward his chest and he stopped rocking.

Mrs. Lincoln turned at the noise, her round face creased with laughter. So did Major Rathbone and Miss Harris. A chrysanthemum of blue smoke hung in Box 7. Booth, with no maniacal gleam, no frenzy, looked at them and said, *"Sic semper tyrannis!"* It was said so quietly that theatergoers only fourteen feet below did not hear the words.

Booth forced his way between the President and his wife. Mrs. Lincoln's laughter dissolved in confusion. She saw the young man towering above her, but she did not know who he was or what he wanted. The major, without understanding, jumped up and tried to grapple with the intruder. Booth dropped the derringer, pulled out his knife and slashed down. Rathbone lifted his left arm to counter the blow, and the knife sliced through his suit and flesh down to the bone.

The assassin moved to the ledge of the box and the major reached for him. Booth shoved him and said loudly: "Revenge for the South!" Mrs. Lincoln began to rub her cheek nervously. She glanced at her husband, but he seemed to be dozing.

Harry Hawk faltered in his lines. He looked up at the State Box indecisively. In the wings, W. J. Ferguson, an actor, heard the explosion and looked up at the box in time to see a dark man come out of the smoke toward the ledge. In the dress circle, people saw Booth climb over the ledge of the box, turn his back to the audience and, holding on with his arms, let himself down over the side.

As he dropped, he pushed his body away from the box and the spur of his right foot caught in the Treasury regimental flag. As the banner ripped and followed him to the stage, the actor, by reflex, held his left foot rigid and stretched out his hands to take the shock of the fall. He landed on the left leg, and it snapped just above the instep. He fell, got up, and ran across the stage to the left, headed for the wings.

The audience did not understand. They watched the running actor, and he fell and got up again. As he disappeared off stage, he was limping on the outside of his left foot; in effect, walking on his ankle.

Hawk, stupefied, did not move. His arms were still raised in half gesture toward the wings through which the other players had departed. Laura Keene, in the Green Room, noticed that the on-stage action had stopped and she came out in time almost to bump into Booth. She brushed by him, wondering what had happened to Harry Hawk.

A piercing scream came from the State Box. This was Mrs. Lincoln. Clara Harris stood and called out to the people below, "Water!" Major Joseph B. Stewart, sitting in the front row of the orchestra with his wife and sister, got up from his seat and climbed onto the stage. He rushed by Harry Hawk and yelled, "Stop that man!"

The conspirator hobbled to the back door and found Johnny Peanut lying on the stone step with the mare's bridle in his hand. Booth's face was grim as he kicked the boy in the chest and snatched the bridle. The mare swung in a circle as he tried to get his good foot up in the stirrup. He was just settling in the saddle when Major Stewart came out the back door yelling, "Stop! Stop!" He reached for the rein as Booth spurred the horse and turned out of the alley.

He swung out through Ninth Street, then right toward Pennsylvania Avenue. His job was to put that first mile between him and his pursuers; he must be ahead of the news he had created. So he spurred the little mare hard, and she laid her ears back and ran. The conspirator knew that his leg had been hurt, but the pain was not great now. He leaned his weight on the right

stirrup and sat with the left thigh half up on the saddle. The mare turned into Pennsylvania Avenue and headed toward the Capitol. A moon two days shy of being full was showing.

At Capitol South, he passed another horseman, trotting in the opposite direction. The speed of the mare attracted the lone rider's attention. Booth turned into New Jersey Avenue, then left at Virginia Avenue. He was now close to the bridge.

WHEN Booth swung away from the rear of Ford's Theatre, Johnny Peanut rolled in the alley, moaning: "He kicked me." Major Stewart turned to go back into the theater and was met by a rush of people coming out. Backstage, Jacob Ritterspaugh ran out of the wings and grabbed Ned Spangler by the shoulders.

"That was Booth!" he shouted. "I swear it was Booth!"

Spangler swung and smashed Ritterspaugh in the face. "Be quiet!" he said. "What do you know about it?"

The audience began to buzz. The people sensed now that this was not a part of the play and they felt alarmed. Major Rathbone pointed dramatically toward the wings and roared: "Stop that man!" Out of the State Box came a second shriek that chilled the audience and brought a large part of it to its feet. Mrs. Lincoln had discovered that Mr. Lincoln could not be aroused.

In the orchestra, one man stood and voiced the question everyone was asking: "For God's sake, what is it? What happened?" Miss Harris was leaning over the ledge of the box wringing her hands and pleading for water. Someone yelled: "He has shot the President!"

All over the theater hoarse voices shouted, "No! No!" "It can't be true!" In a trice the aisles were jammed, the stairs were crowded, some people trying to get up to the dress circle, others trying to get down. Harry Hawk stood in stage center and wept. A group of men tried to force open the white door but the harder they pushed the more firmly it held.

Some of the patrons got out on the street and spread the word that Lincoln had been shot and was lying dead in the box inside. A crowd collected. From E and F Streets people came running. Many tried to get into the theater as others were trying to get out.

One man shouted, "I'm glad it happened!" In a moment he was scuffed underfoot, most of his clothes were ripped from his body and he was carried toward a lamppost. Three policemen drew revolvers to save his life.

Rathbone, soaked with blood, went back into the corridor to open the door and found the wooden bar. He yelled for the men on the other side to stop leaning against the door and was finally able to lift the bar. He pleaded that only doctors be admitted. A short, handsome man with sideburns and mustache yelled from the rear of the mob that he was a doctor. Men pushed him forward. He was Dr. Charles Leale, twenty-three years of age, Assistant Surgeon of United States Volunteers.

President Lincoln's knees began to relax and his head to drop forward. Mrs. Lincoln moaned, and pressed her head against his chest. Dr. Leale walked into the box. He lifted Mrs. Lincoln's head off her husband's chest. The First Lady grabbed his hand. "Oh, Doctor!" she cried. "Is he dead? Can he recover? Will you take charge of him? Oh, my dear husband! My dear husband!"

"I will do what I can," the doctor said, and motioned to the men who crowded into the box behind him to remove her. She was taken to the sofa in Box 8, and Miss Harris sat beside her, patting her hand.

At first Leale thought that the President was dead. He pushed the shoulders back in the rocker so that the trunk no longer had a tendency to fall forward. Then he studied the President from head to foot. He said to the gawking men: "Get a lamp. Lock that door back there and admit no one except doctors. Someone hold matches until the lamp gets here."

Dr. Leale was the first person to bring order around the dying President. The eyes of the patient were closed. There was no sound of breathing. There was no sign of a wound. Men held matches as Leale placed the palm of his hand under the whiskered chin of the President, lifted it, and then permitted it to drop.

In the crowd peering in from the corridor he saw a few soldiers. "Come here," he said to them. "Get him out of the chair and put him on the floor." Half afraid, they did as he told them. The body was relaxed. Leale expected to find a stab wound

because, passing the theater on his way back to the army hospital, he had heard a man yell something about the President and a man with a knife. Further, he had seen Major Rathbone's knife wound.

Men in a circle held matches as the doctor unbuttoned the black coat, the vest, unfastened the gold watch chain. While trying to unbutton the collar, he became impatient and asked for a pocketknife. A man handed him one, and Doctor Leale slit the shirt and collar down the front. He bent low and put his ear to the chest. Then he lifted an eyelid and saw evidence of a brain injury. He ran his fingers through the patient's hair and at the back of the head he found matted blood. His fingers loosened a clot and the patient responded with shallow breathing and a weak pulse.

On stage, men lifted another doctor into the box. This was Dr. Charles Taft. He was senior to Leale, but he placed himself at Leale's disposal at once as an assistant. Leale lifted the body into a slumped sitting position and asked Dr. Taft to hold him. In the saffron flicker of the matches, his fingers probed the edges of the wound. The President had been shot behind the left ear and the examination seemed to indicate that the lead ball had moved diagonally forward and slightly upward through the brain toward the right eye. Dr. Leale felt around the eye, but could not find the ball. It was somewhere in the brain.

Gently, he lowered the great head to the floor. He knew that Lincoln had to die. He straddled the hips and started artificial respiration. His business was to prolong life, and so he raised the long arms up high and lowered them to the floor — up and back — forward and down.

Dr. Albert F. A. King was admitted to the box. Leale asked each doctor to manipulate an arm while he pressed upward on the belly to stimulate the heart action.

Soldiers started to clear the box of people. From on stage, questions flew up to the box. "How is he?" "Was he stabbed?" "Who did it?"

For the first time someone other than Jacob Ritterspaugh uttered the name of John Wilkes Booth. It was shouted across the dress circle and out of the half-empty theater into the lobby and cascaded into Tenth Street. "Booth!" "An actor named Booth!" "The man-

agement must have been in on the plot!" "Burn the theater!" Grief spirals to insanity.

Dr. Leale sat astride the President's hips and leaned down and pressed, thorax to thorax. He turned his head and pressed his mouth against the President's lips and breathed for him. Then he listened to the heart again and when he sat up he noticed that the breathing was stronger. It sounded like a snore.

"His wound is mortal," he said to the other doctors. "It is impossible for him to recover."

Two of the soldiers removed their caps. A lamp arrived. Dr. Leale saw a hand in front of him with brandy. He dripped a small amount between the bluish lips and watched the Adam's apple. It bobbed. The liquid had been swallowed.

Leale paused in his labors to wipe his face with a kerchief. "Can he be removed to somewhere nearby?" he said.

"Wouldn't it be possible to carry him to the White House?" Dr. King said.

"No," Dr. Leale said. "If it is attempted he will be dead before we reach there."

On the couch, Mrs. Lincoln sat rocking slightly. Miss Laura Keene had come into the box and was now sitting with her and Miss Harris. All three had heard Dr. Leale's words, but Mrs. Lincoln seemed not to comprehend.

Dr. Taft asked an officer to run out and find a suitable place nearby for President Lincoln. He called four soldiers to carry the President. Two formed a sling under the upper trunk; the other two held the thin thighs. Dr. King held the left shoulder. Dr. Leale held the head in cupped hands and walked backward, his own head twisted to see where he was going.

"Guards!" he yelled. "Guards! Clear the passage!"

A group of troopers came to life and preceded the dismal party, shoving the curious aside. "Clear out!" they yelled. "Clear out!"

At the head of the stairs Leale shouted orders as the party began the slow descent to the lobby.

Tenth Street was massed with humanity as far as the eye could see. A paunchy captain of infantry impressed more soldiers and ordered them double-ranked to precede the body. He drew his

sword and said: "Surgeon, give me your commands and I will see that they are obeyed." Leale looked at the houses across the street and asked the captain to get them across.

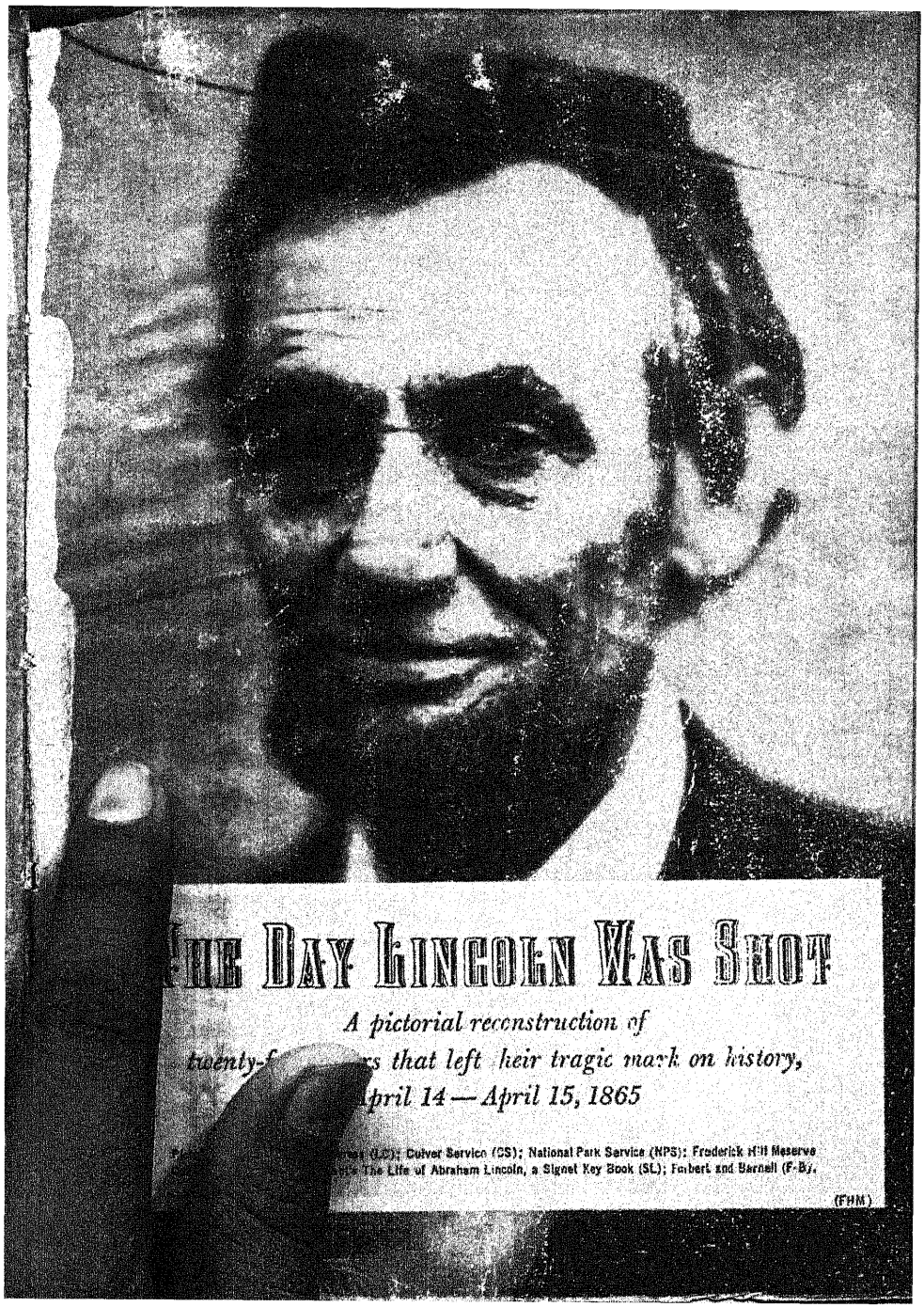
For the first time the crowd saw the shaggy head and big swinging feet. A roar of rage went up. Someone yelled: "God Almighty! Get him to the White House!" Leale shook his head. "He would die on the way." Men in the crowd began to weep. The little party pressed through, inch by inch, the mob forming a canopy of frightened eyes over the body. The crowd pressed in ahead and closed in behind. The paunchy captain swung his sword and roared: "Out of the way, you fools!"

Every few steps Leale stopped the party and pulled a clot loose. The procession seemed interminable. When they finally got across the street, the steady roar of the crowd made it impossible to hear or to be heard. Leale wanted to go into the nearest house, but a soldier on the stoop made motions that no one was home. At the next house toward F Street Leale saw a man with a lighted candle standing in the doorway, beckoning. This was the William Petersen house at 453 Tenth Street. Mr. Petersen was a tailor.

Lincoln was carried up the steps and into the house. The man with the candle motioned for the doctors to follow him. They moved down a narrow hall. To the right was a stairway going up to the second floor. To the left was a parlor, with a coal grate and black horsehair furniture. Behind it was a sitting room. Under the stairway was a small bedroom.

Here the President was placed on a bed. A soldier on leave, who had rented the room, picked up his gear and left. The room measured fifteen by nine feet. The wallpaper was an oatmeal pattern. A thin reddish rug covered part of the floor. There were a plain maple bureau, three straight-backed chairs, a washstand with white crock bowl, a wood stove. On the wall were framed prints of "The Village Blacksmith" and Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair." The bed was set against the wall under the stairway.

It was too small for the President. Leale ordered it pulled away from the wall, and asked that the footboard be taken off, but it was found that if that was done the bed would collapse. The body was placed diagonally on the bed, the head close to the wall,


THE DAY LINCOLN WAS SHOT
A pictorial reconstruction of
twenty-f s that left their tragic mark on history,
April 14 — April 15, 1865
(FHM)

the legs hanging off the other end. Extra pillows were found and Lincoln's head was propped so that his chin was on his chest. Leale then ordered an officer to open a bedroom window — there were two, facing a little courtyard — and to clear everybody out and to post a guard on the front stoop.

At the back of the room Leale held his first formal conference with the other doctors. As they talked in whispers, the man who had held the candle went through the house lighting the gas fixtures. Leale began to remove the President's clothing to make a thorough examination. He looked up and saw Mrs. Lincoln standing in the doorway with Miss Keene and Miss Harris. He asked them to please wait in the front room. The patient was undressed and the doctors searched all of the areas of the body, but they found no other wound.

The feet were cold to the touch. The body was placed between sheets and a comforter was placed over the top. A soldier was sent for hot water and heated blankets. Another soldier was sent for mustard plasters. These were applied to the front of the body, from shoulders to ankles.

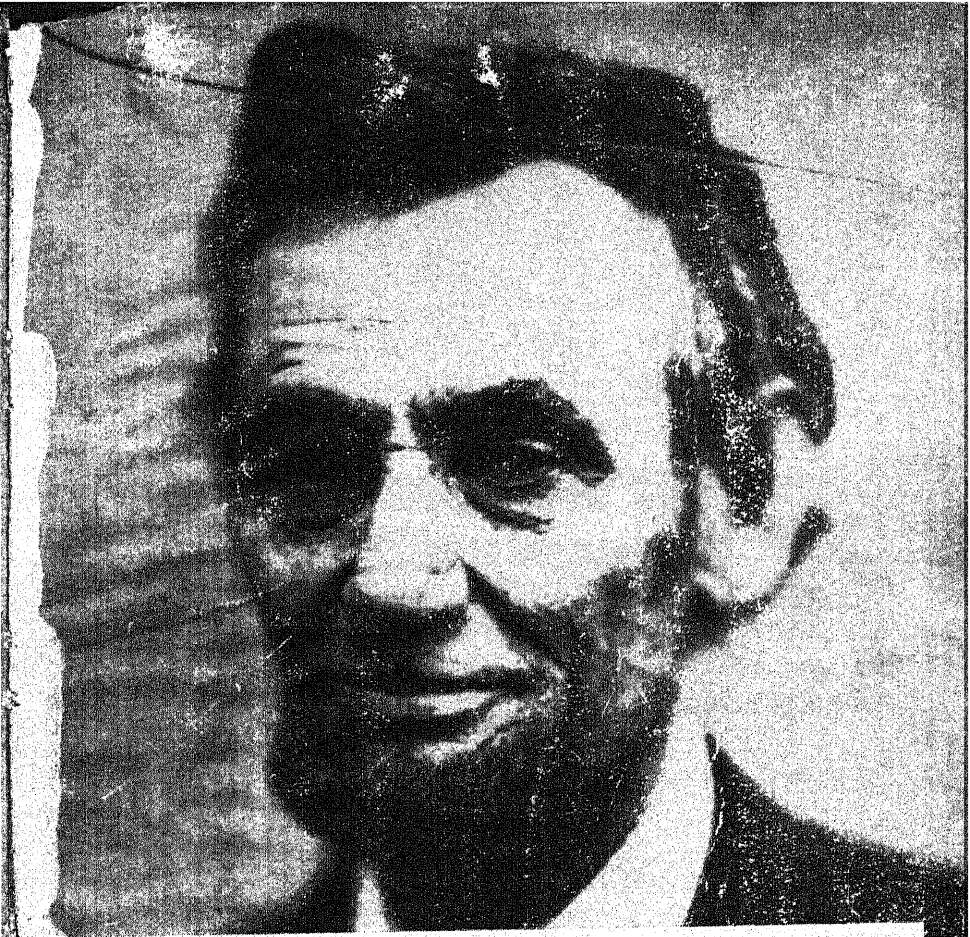
Occasionally the President sighed. His pulse was forty-four and light; breathing was stertorous; the pupil of the left eye was contracted; the right was dilated; both were proved insensitive to light. Leale sent two soldiers to summon Robert Lincoln, Surgeon General Barnes, Dr. Robert K. Stone, President Lincoln's physician, and Lincoln's pastor, Dr. Phineas D. Gurley.

The deathwatch began.

At ten minutes past ten, Lewis Paine and David Herold rode into Lafayette Square, across the street from the White House.

A Pictorial Supplement

The sixteen-page picture section which follows was specially prepared by the editors of Condensed Books. It contains contemporary photographs, many by the most famous cameraman of the era, Matthew B. Brady, engravings from magazines of the period, and modern photographs (six taken specifically for this supplement) of documents and relics of April 14, 1865.



The Day Lincoln Was Shot

A pictorial reconstruction of twenty-four hours that left their tragic mark on history, April 14—April 15, 1865

Pictures from: Library of Congress (LC); Culver Service (CS); National Park Service (NPS); Frederick Hill Meserve Collection (FHM); Stefan Lorant's The Life of Abraham Lincoln, a Signet Key Book (SL); Forbert and Barnell (F-B).

(FHM)

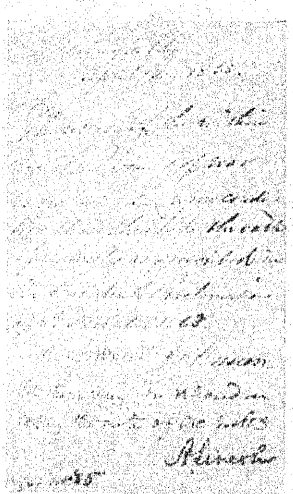


Lincoln with his son Tad, the only member of the family ever photographed with him. The President took great pleasure in Tad, a lively 12-year-old in 1865. The boy breakfasted with his parents and brother, Robert, on April 14 and teased to no avail to join the theater party Mrs. Lincoln planned for the evening



(GS)

Four anxious war years were over, but there was no letup in the load of routine business facing the 56-year-old Chief Executive. Every morning between his bedroom and office Lincoln had to press through a mob of favor seekers, many of whom had slept in the White House halls. Two of the thirteen documents he is known to have signed on April 14 are shown. *Left*, endorsement of a recommendation by Vice-President Andrew Johnson for release of prisoners of war, a recent discovery never before reproduced. *Below*, a note to Secretary of State William H. Seward calling for Cabinet to meet with General Grant. Seward's son Frederick was acting for his father, who was ill.



(LC)

Executive Mansion.

Washington, April 14, 1865

Hon. Sec. of State

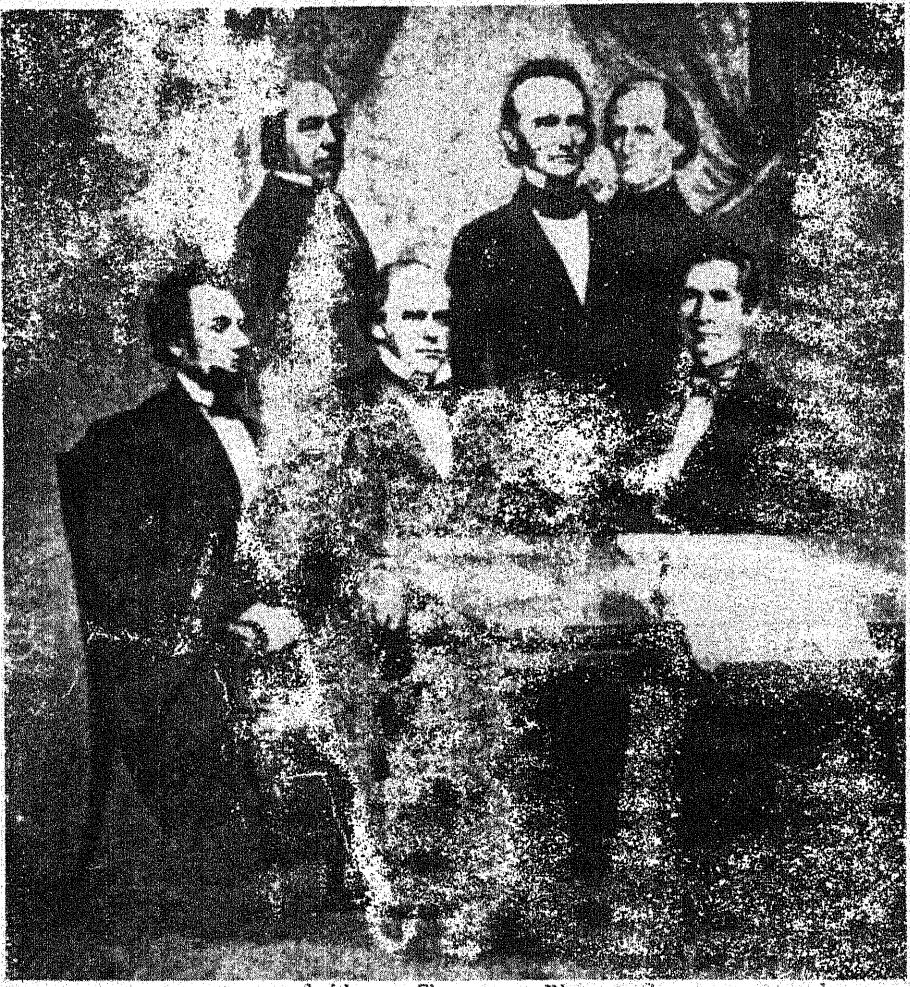
Sir.

Please assemble the Cabinet at 11. A.M. to-day. Gen. Grant will be present.

Yours truly

A. Lincoln

(SL)



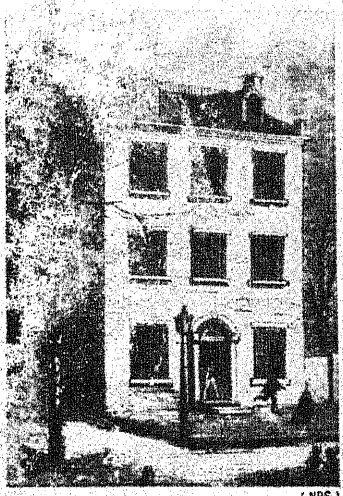
Smith Chase Blair Cameron Seward

April 14 was Good Friday, a solemn day following Washington's week-long celebration of Lee's surrender. General Grant was the man of the hour; when the President rose to greet him in his office at 11 A.M. his official family (shown here in an earlier photograph) broke into applause. Reconstruction was discussed at this meeting. Moderation was the mood. Afterward Grant lingered, framing an excuse for not accepting, with his wife, Mrs. Lincoln's invitation to the theater that evening. Only the day



...Wolfe ... Bates (FHM)

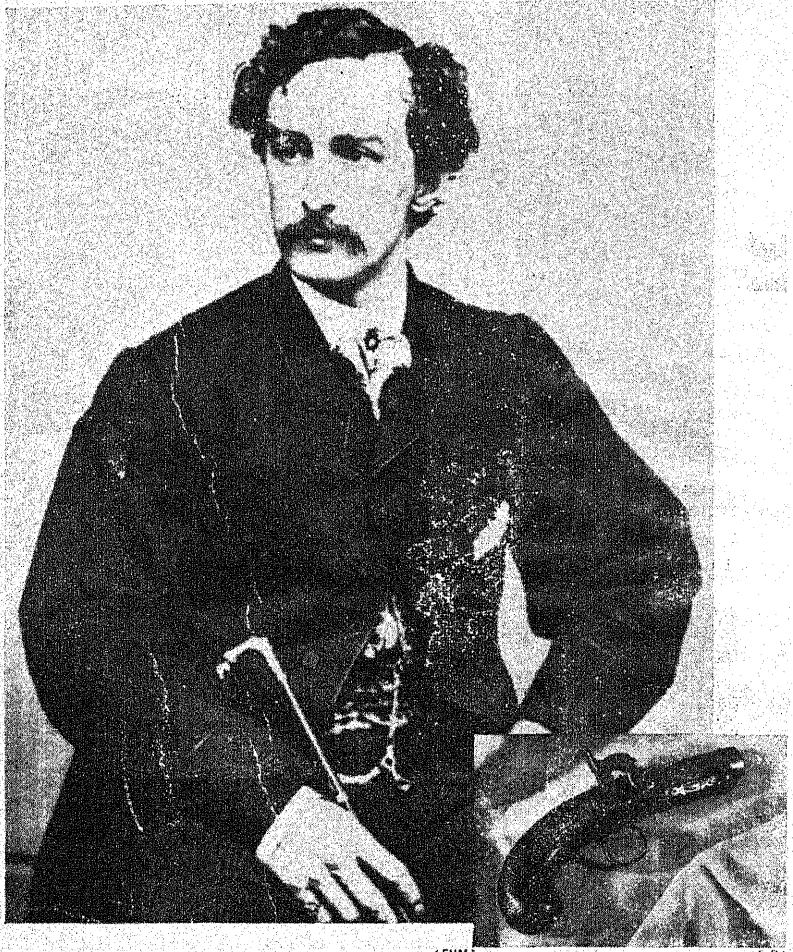
At "the Old ...house," Seward's home, the secretary lay in pain, ...s jaw, fractured nine days ...r in an accident, was encas... in a steel frame holding his head and neck rigid. That ... t would save his life.



(NPS)

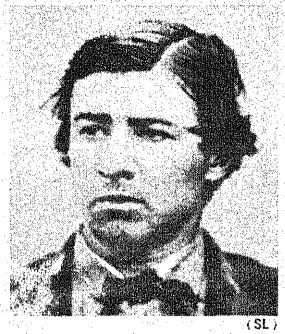
before. Mrs. Lincoln had invited the General, but not Mrs. Grant, to view the victory illumination. This had intensified a coolness already existing between the two ladies. Mrs. Grant was now determined that nothing should delay their departure from the city that afternoon for a long-promised visit to their children in New Jersey.

Late in the day the President and Mrs. Lincoln went for a drive. She said, "Dear husband, you almost startle me with your great cheerfulness."



(FHM) (F-B)

John Wilkes Booth, a romantic young actor ardently devoted to the South, had twice plotted to capture Lincoln and failed. Now, goaded by Southern defeat, his passionate hatred took a sinister cast from which there could be no turning back: on the afternoon of April 14 he wrote a letter to be delivered next morning to a newspaper, confessing his plot to assassinate Lincoln and others and naming his confederates. *Inset,* Booth's single-shot derringer fired a lead ball almost half an inch in circumference.



(SL)

David Herold *(above)* and Lewis Paine *(right)* were early recruits of Booth. Paine's assignment was to enter Seward's house, claiming to have a doctor's prescription, and murder the Secretary of State. Herold was to hold their horses.



(SL)

Booth arranged at Howard's Stable to have his big one-eyed horse delivered behind Ford's Theatre for Paine to use. At another stable Booth ordered a skittish roan mare for his own use.

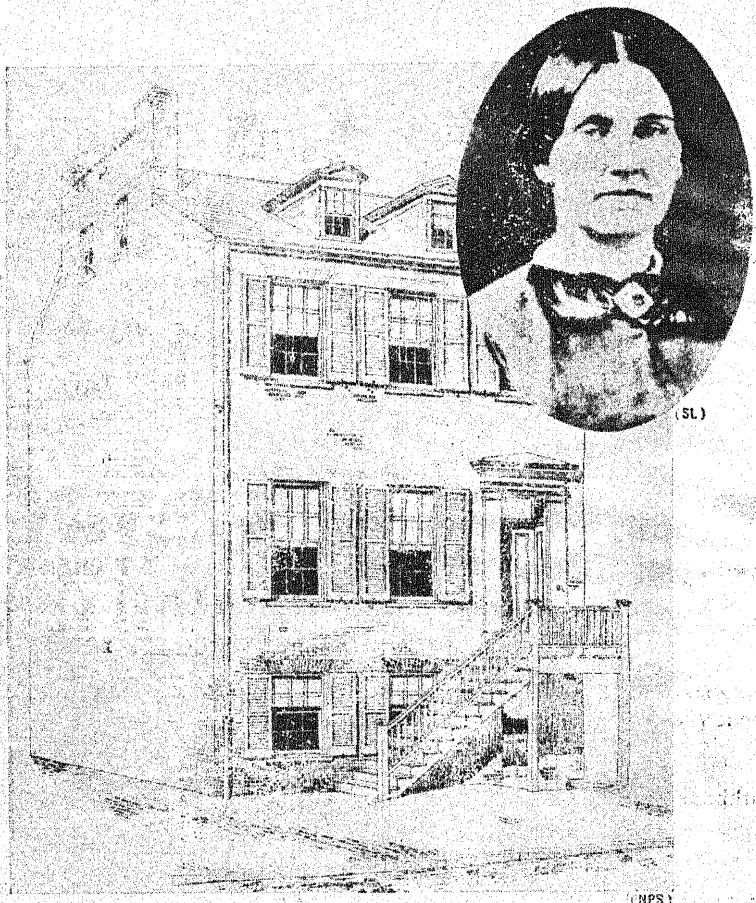


(SL)

George Atzerodt was assigned to kill Vice-President Johnson. Little trusting this man, Booth in the afternoon left a friendly note for Johnson, hoping to implicate him in the Lincoln plot if Atzerodt should fail.



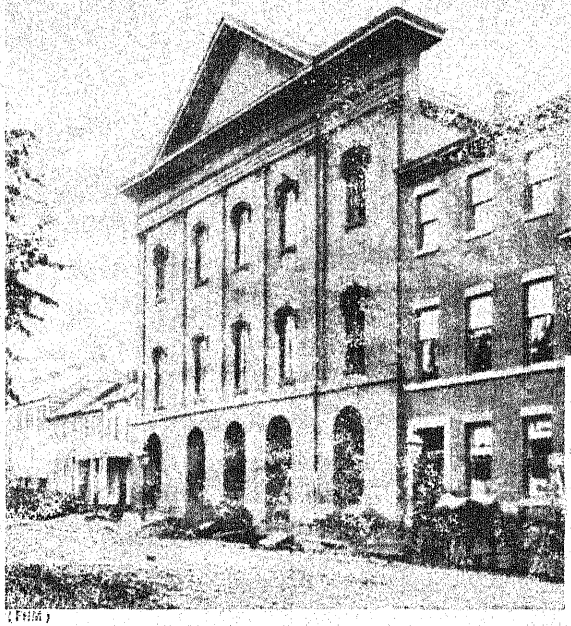
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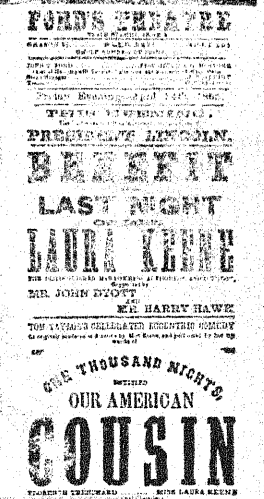
(SL)

(NPS)

The plotters often met at the boardinghouse of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, whose son John, a Confederate courier, was a conspirator with Booth. On April 14 a business errand took her to Surrattsville, Md. She delivered to a tavernkeeper a package from Booth, later picked up by him in flight—field glasses. This, and an incriminating message she had previously delivered to the tavernkeeper from Booth, hanged Mary Surratt, the first woman in America to be legally executed. Today her innocence seems assured.



(FHM)

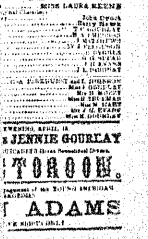


The play at Ford's Theatre was an old comedy, *Our American Cousin*, with the charming Laura Keene *(below, right)*. In the Grants' place Mrs. Lincoln had invited a New York Senator's daughter, Miss Clara Harris, and her fiancé, Major Rathbone, to be guests in the President's box.

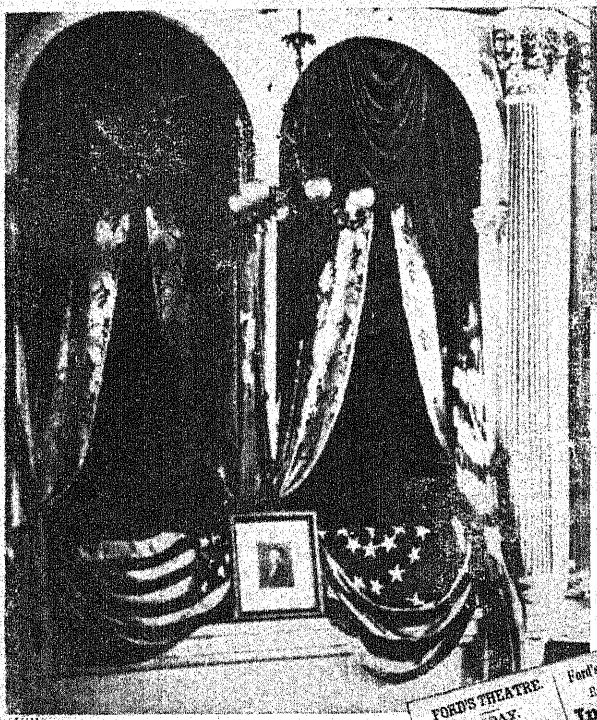
In the afternoon, Booth, visiting the theater, invited the stagehands to Taltavul's tavern, to the right of the theater, *above*. Returning to the empty theater, he studied the President's box, the 11-foot drop to the stage. In the door of the box he drilled a hole, hardly noticeable, giving him a view of the President's position.



(FHM)



(SL)



(FHM)



(FHM)

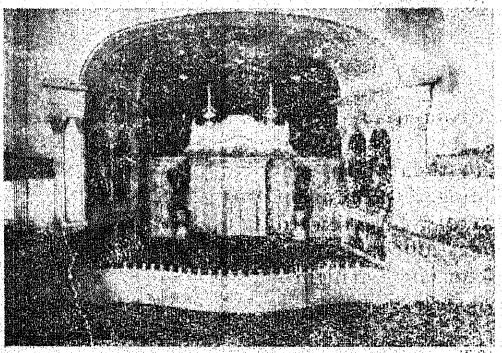
Absorbed in the play, the President, sitting in the rocker customarily provided for him, took Mrs. Lincoln's hand and held it. She whispered, "What will Miss Harris think of my hanging on to you so?"



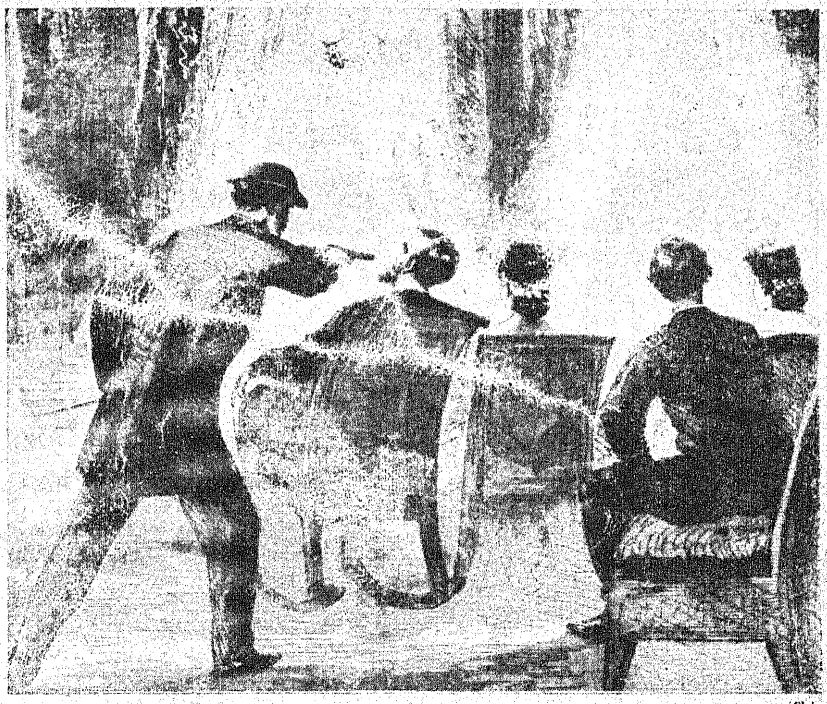
(NPS)

The President's box was decorated with a flag loaned by the Treasury for the occasion. His bodyguard, John Parker, inspected and found the arrangements satisfactory. He escorted the President's party to the box. Bored after a few minutes at his post, Parker left theater to go to the tavern next door.

Right, a reconstruction of the theater and set. To facilitate his escape, Booth planned to strike at moment when only one actor would be on stage.



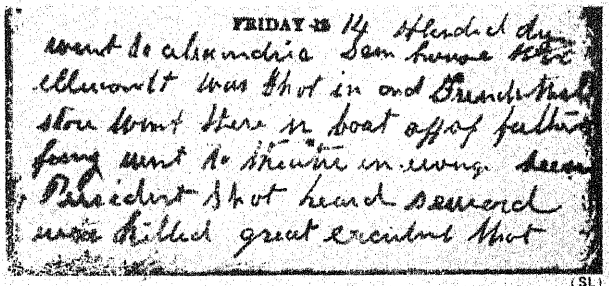
(F-S)



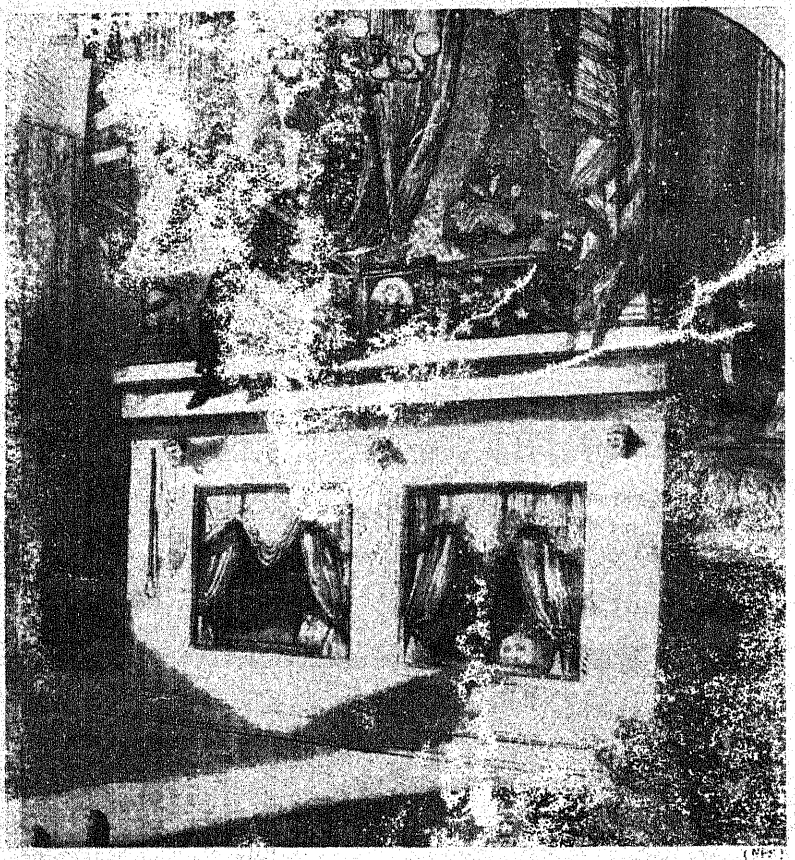
(SL)

The time was 10:15. Unnoticed, John Wilkes Booth entered the President's box, fired one shot. The President's head inclined toward his chest and he stopped rocking. *"Sic semper tyrannis!"—thus ever to tyrants*—Booth exclaimed. Maj. Rathbone grappled with the intruder, who had dropped his gun and now brandished a knife.

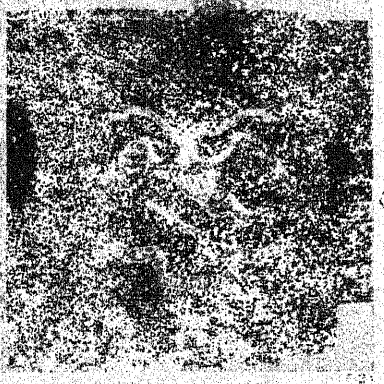
From diary of an eyewitness: "...Went to theater in evening, seen President Shot heard seward was killed great excitement that night."



(SL)

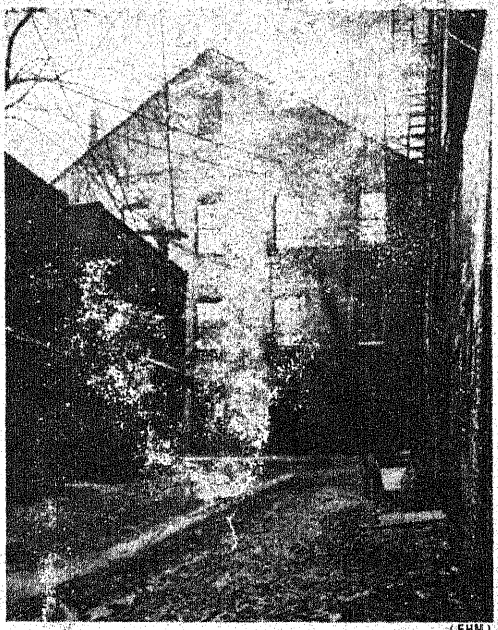


Clinbing over the edge of the box, Booth caught his spur in the Treasury Guards' flag, bringing it down with him as he lowered himself (rather than leapt, as in this picture by a contemporary artist) to the stage. His left leg was broken in the fall. The audience, stunned, watched the actor cross stage at a limping run. In the State Box Mrs. Lincoln screamed.

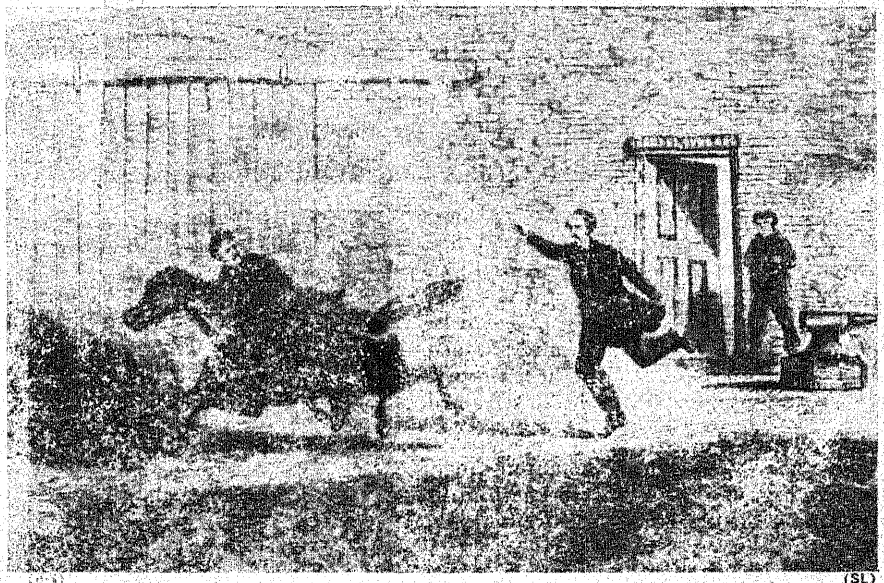


Right, across points to tear where spur caught Treasury flag, now on display at The Lincoln Museum, in the old Ford's Theatre building.

At the back door of Ford's Booth grabbed the reins of his horse from a stagehand. By now he had been recognized. He galloped down alley *(right)* and across the city to the Navy Yard Bridge. Herold, deserting Paine, joined him. Paine, who had brutally but not fatally beaten Seward and his family, got lost in the streets of Washington.



(FHM)



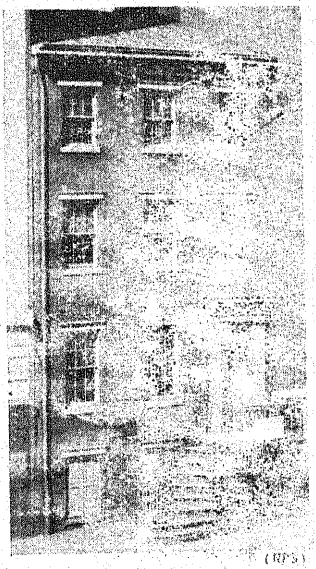
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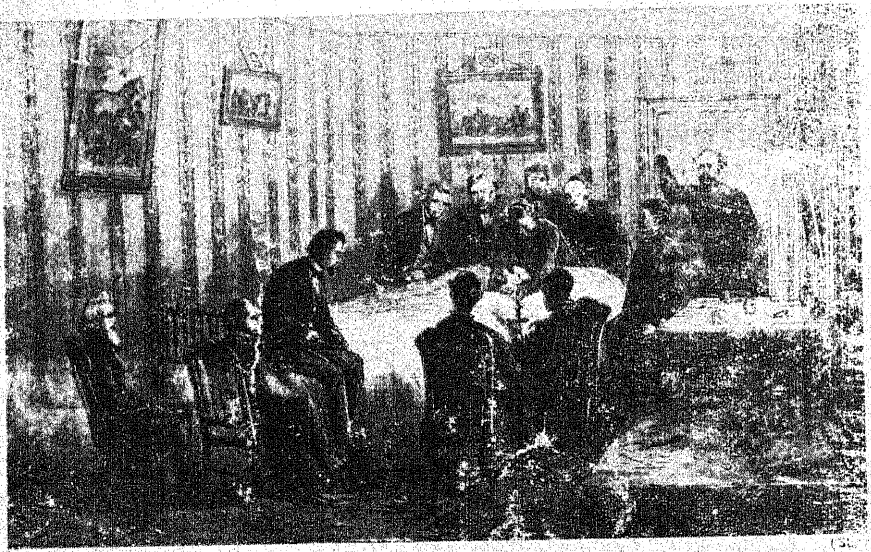
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Carried to a house across the street, the unconscious President was laid on a bed pulled away from the wall to accommodate his tall figure diagonally.

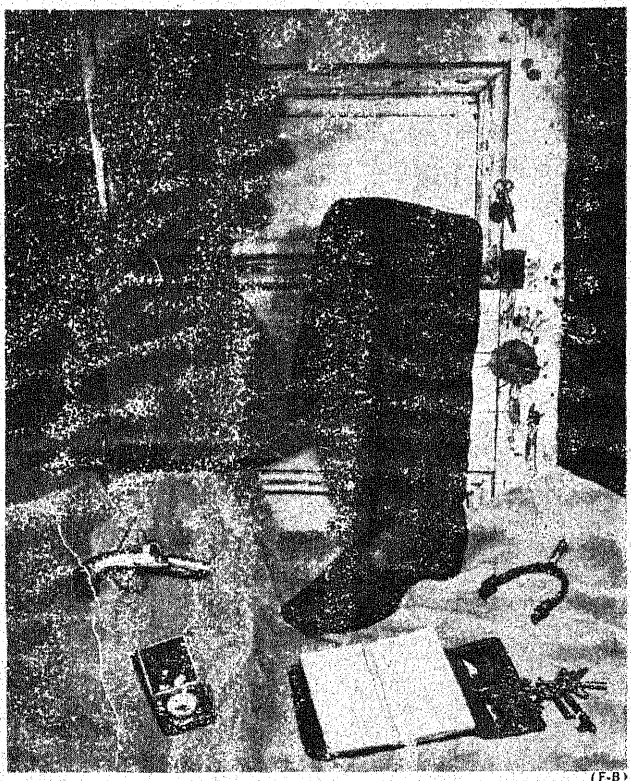
The death watch continued all night. The President never regained consciousness. People came and went. Robert Lincoln alternately watched over his dying father and comforted his mother in the next room. At 7:22 in the morning Abraham Lincoln died. Secretary of War Stanton broke the silence that filled the tiny room: "Now he belongs to the ages."



(HFS)

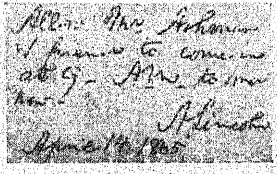


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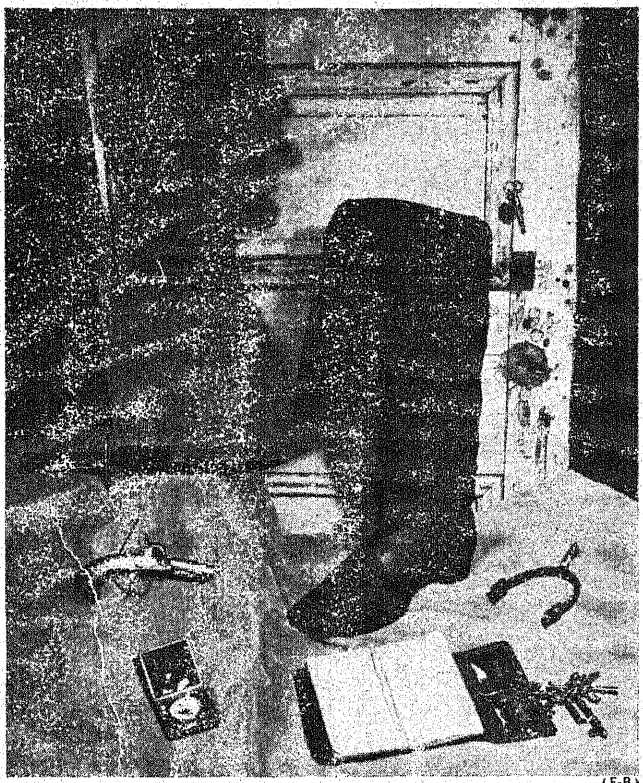


(F-B)

Memorabilia of Booth, posed at The Lincoln Museum against the door to the President's box: boot, slit to remove it from his broken leg, his derringer, knife, spur, compass, diary and keys. A bust of Lincoln casts his shadow in silhouette. *Below*, last note written by the President.

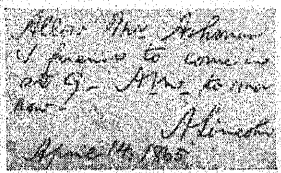


(LC)



(F-B)

Memorabilia of Booth, posed at The Lincoln Museum against the door to the President's box: boot, slit to remove it from his broken leg, his derringer, knife, spur, compass, diary and keys. A bust of Lincoln casts his shadow in silhouette. *Below,* last note written by the President.



(LC)

They stopped in front of the Seward house on Madison Place. Three doors away, a sentry lounged in front of General C. C. Augur's personal quarters. Paine dismounted, handed the reins to Herold. He repeated the name of the doctor, "Verdi, Verdi," as though it was difficult to remember. He ordered Herold to wait for him in front of Seward's door.

He removed a bottle from his jacket pocket, walked up to the front door and rapped hard with the knocker. Through the chased-glass panels light could be seen. Paine rapped again. The door was opened by William Bell, a young Negro in a white coat.

"I have medicine from Doctor Verdi," Paine said.

William reached for it. Paine pulled his hand away. "It has to be delivered personally."

"Sir," said the boy, "I can't let you go upstairs. I have strict orders —"

The rare temper began to rise. "You're talking to a white man," Paine said. "This medicine is for your master and, by God, I'm going to give it to him."

"But, sir . . ."

"Out of my way, nigger. I'm going up." Paine pushed his way into the big reception hall and pounded up the stairs, William a step or two behind, pleading with Paine to walk quietly.

On the third floor Frederick Seward, Assistant Secretary of State, heard the voices and the tramp of heavy boots. He had been in bed, and now he hurried out in a dressing robe. He saw Lewis Paine coming upstairs, with Bell directly behind. Angry, Seward demanded in a whisper what the commotion was all about. Paine whispered that he had a prescription from Dr. Verdi.

Seward held out his hand for the prescription. Paine shook his head. The doctor had told him to make certain that this medicine got into no other hands than those of the Secretary of State.

"My father may be sleeping," Seward said. "I will see."

He went up the hall to a door on the left side. Until then, Paine had no idea where the Secretary of State might be. In a moment Seward was back.

"You can't go in," he said. "He's sleeping. Give it to me."

"I was ordered to give it to the Secretary."

"You cannot see Mr. Seward. Go back and tell the doctor that I refused to let you see him, if you think you cannot trust me with the medicine. I am Mr. Seward and I am in charge here." His voice began to rise.

Paine hesitated. Then he said: "Very well, sir. I will go."

He started down the stairs. Then he pulled his pistol, whirled, and fired at Frederick Seward. The hammer clicked. There was no explosion. Paine jumped to the top step and brought the butt of the gun down on Seward's head. He fell and Paine bent over him, smashing again and again at head and neck.

Bell, halfway up the stairs, ran down to the first floor and out into the street, screaming, "Murder! Murder!"

David Herold saw him. Quickly the assassin's escort dismounted, tied Paine's horse to a tree, remounted and galloped off. As he turned into Pennsylvania Avenue at Fifteenth, Booth was at the other end of the Avenue, turning into Capitol South.

Upstairs, Paine found that he had broken his pistol. He threw it at the unconscious man, drew a knife and hurried to the front bedroom. When he pushed the door, he found that someone was leaning against it. He crashed his weight against the panel. The door flew open and Paine fell inside. The room was in darkness except for a slice of light from the hall.

The assassin saw a moving figure, and slashed at it. He heard a man scream in pain. He jumped on the bed and, when he felt the helpless figure beneath him, he struck with his knife again and again. He heard moans and he lifted the knife once more, as high as he could. Someone jerked his arm from behind and he turned and found that in the darkness he was battling two men. They pulled him off the bed. The Secretary of State, still conscious, had the presence of mind to roll off the bed onto the floor. Paine hacked at the restraining arms around him. When he was free he ran out into the hall, yelling, "I'm mad! I'm mad!"

There he saw a young lady in nightdress, screaming. At the same time he saw a man coming toward him, looking confused by all the noise. The assassin permitted him to come close, then plunged his knife into the man's chest up to the hilt. Mr. Hansell, State Department messenger, fell without uttering a word.

Paine ran downstairs and out into the street. He looked for Herold and found that he had been deserted. He untied his horse, mounted, and turned at a walk toward H Street. William Bell followed behind, yelling "Murder!" Soldiers came running from General Augur's sentry box. They passed the assassin, passed the Negro boy, who was pointing at Paine, and ran up the steps of The Old Clubhouse.

Bell kept behind Paine until the assassin, annoyed, spurred his horse into a trot. Bell finally gave up and hurried back to Mr. Seward's house.

It looked unreal. Hansell was bleeding profusely and gagging on his blood. At the top landing Frederick Seward lay on his side, in a coma. On the rug beside him were a broken pistol and a black felt hat—Paine's. A male nurse, Sergeant Robinson, was badly hurt and bleeding. Miss Fanny Seward, who had been knocked down when Paine had first entered the sickroom, was unconscious on the floor. She was one of the "men" he had been battling.

Major Augustus Seward, injured but not bleeding, was standing in the front doorway with a huge pistol in his hand, as people came running from all over Lafayette Square. Bell tried to tell his story and point to which way the man had gone, but no one had time to listen to him.

Paine outdistanced the shouts and remembered that Booth had said to turn right, so he turned right. After a half hour, houses became infrequent and he saw dark fields. In the moonlight he saw some soldiers coming toward him, so he got off the horse and hid in a field. He was about a half mile from the Navy Yard Bridge, but he didn't know it.

DOWNTOWN Washington was alive with running people who shouted to darkened houses that assassins were at large and that the Secretary of State had been murdered. This wave of hysteria, as Booth had figured, met an opposite wave which roared that the President had been killed in cold blood at Ford's Theatre.

The news reached different people in different ways. Mr. Stanton was undressing for bed when a soldier banged on the broken bellpull and then rapped on the door. Stanton heard the news

about Lincoln and Seward, went back upstairs and told Mrs. Stanton that it was humbug. He was getting into bed when more people came with the same wild story. He dressed and hurried to Seward's house. Robert Lincoln had just arrived home when the tragic news came. He too did not believe it at first. Surgeon General Barnes was homeward bound in his carriage and was passing Willard's Hotel when a cavalryman rode up and advised him to go to Ford's Theatre at once — the President had been shot.

Barnes ordered the driver to take him to his office at top speed. He was packing his instruments when a wild-eyed soldier burst in and said that Secretary of State Seward had been stabbed. The Surgeon General said that he had heard from a man who must have been confused that it was the President. He went off to Seward's home. He was dressing the wounds of Frederick Seward when a Negro hack driver pleaded his way up the stairs and begged him to come at once to Tenth Street, the President was dying.

Robert Lincoln raced to Tenth Street in a carriage. A mass of humanity blocked the road and Robert put his head in his hands and moaned. When soldiers tried to turn the carriage away, he said in anguish:

"It's my father! My father! I'm Robert Lincoln!"

With help he got through on foot. When he saw his mother in the parlor of the Petersen house, he burst into tears.

BEFORE Surgeon General Barnes reached Secretary Seward's bedroom, Nurse Robinson and Miss Fanny Seward had turned the gas up and found the old man on the floor between bed and wall. His eyes were open, staring into pools of his own blood.

Miss Fanny said: "Is my father dead?"

Robinson felt for a pulse and found none. "He has no pulse," he said.

Miss Fanny threw up the front window and screamed "Murder!"

The Secretary of State whispered: "I am not dead. Send for a surgeon. Send for the police. Close the house."

The nurse put the patient back on the bed and got the twisted bedclothes off the floor and wrapped them around him. With a cloth, he wiped the red mask off the face and saw two pulsing

wounds, one on each cheek. The right cheek was slashed from ear to lip and hung in a flap over the lower jaw. The leather-covered iron brace around neck and jaw had saved the man's life.

Barnes, having treated Frederick Seward, bound the Secretary's wounds and said that there was "severe loss of blood, and shock. If the patient recovers from the shock he will probably live." Frederick, he thought, might die. He then went to the Petersen house, where Lincoln lay.

VICE-PRESIDENT Andrew Johnson heard a pounding on his door. He was half asleep. He got up, fumbling for the lamp beside his bed. Outside, former Governor Leonard J. Farwell said: "Mr. Johnson, I must see you." The Vice-President opened the door.

"Someone," Farwell whispered, closing the door behind him, "has murdered the President."

At first Johnson did not believe the news. Then he saw Farwell's wild, agonized expression. He ran to the man and they threw their arms around each other as though without support each would collapse. Farwell opened the door and peered up and down the corridor. He rang for servants and asked for guards. One man was put inside the door and told to admit no one.

Someone knocked and Farwell, frightened to frenzy, refused to permit the door to be opened until he recognized the voice of a Congressman. The Congressman said that there were five hundred people in the lobby. Johnson emerged from his bedroom shoving his shirttails into his trousers. "Governor," he said, "go back to the theater and find out how the President is."

In a little while Farwell came back with Major James Rowan O'Beirne, Provost Marshal of the District of Columbia. There were now a lot of people in Johnson's two rooms, in such a state of excitement that they were ready to believe any idiocy. Farwell said that the President was dying; that Seward was dead; and that it was part of a gigantic plot to kill Johnson and all Cabinet members.

O'Beirne said that Johnson should remain in his rooms with his friends. The Vice-President bridled and insisted that his place was at the side of the President. O'Beirne urged him to wait until

he returned for him, when the excitement in the streets had died a little.

THE NEWS jumped from house to house, from street to street. In nightclothes citizens gathered on the sidewalks. L. A. Gobright of the Associated Press was closing his office for the night when he heard the first wild rumor and, without waiting to check it, wired his New York office:

THE PRESIDENT WAS SHOT IN A THEATER TONIGHT AND PERHAPS MORTALLY WOUNDED.

The Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Salmon P. Chase, heard the news at home and believed that it was mistaken. When he heard the same report again he decided that he could not be of service to Lincoln, and went to bed.

The Navy Secretary, Mr. Welles, was sleeping when Mrs. Welles awakened him with the news that Mr. Seward was dead. He dressed, hurried over to The Old Clubhouse. Stanton arrived at almost the same moment. They saw blood and hysteria and anguish. On the way downstairs, Welles said he had heard that the President had been shot but he did not believe it.

"It is true," said Stanton. "I had a talk with a man who had just left Ford's Theatre. The President is still there."

"Then let us go immediately."

THE NEWS had reached George Atzerodt and he was lost in panic. He galloped back to the stable where he had rented his horse and gave it up. On foot, he could not hope to join Booth in Surrattsville. Nor did he dare return to Kirkwood House. He decided to take a horsecar for the Navy Yard, where he had a friend who worked in a store. He would sleep on the floor there.

A block away from Ford's, in a little hideaway saloon, John Matthews, the actor who Booth had said "did not deserve to live," was drinking. He drank quietly until the news slapped against the doors. Someone shouted that the President had been killed. Matthews paid for his drinks and hurried out. The corner was

full of people. A troop of cavalry, at a dead gallop, ran through the crowd headed toward the theater. Matthews said to a man: "Who — who did it?"

Somebody said an actor named Booth. John Matthews felt ill. He held his right hand against his chest, where the letter to the editor of the *National Intelligencer* reposed.

Matthews went back to his hotel and started a fire in the grate and then he ripped open the letter and read it. What it had to say about the plot on Mr. Lincoln's life made him sick. It was signed with the names of the men who were part of the plot, and Matthews felt that by having possession of this incriminating letter he too was a conspirator. He burned the letter in the grate.

EARLIER, John Fletcher, resuming his search for Herold, stood in front of Willard's Hotel. He saw a roan coming fast out of Fifteenth Street. As the rider approached the well-lighted hotel, he slowed to a trot. Fletcher assured himself that it was David Herold and ran out into the street shouting: "You get off that horse now! You've had that horse long enough!"

Herold, who was coming from Seward's home and was trying not to excite suspicion, pulled the horse away from Fletcher's outstretched hand and swung up Fourteenth Street toward F. Fletcher ran back to his stable, saddled a horse and hurried in pursuit of the boy. He reasoned that if Herold was going to steal the horse he would cross the Navy Yard Bridge and head into southern Maryland. This constituted the first real pursuit of the conspirators. Mr. Fletcher was at this time about a mile and a half behind Booth and a half mile behind Herold.

AT THE Navy Yard Bridge, Sergeant Silas T. Cobb was near the end of his tour of duty. He and two sentries patrolled the Washington City end of the long wooden span. They challenged all suspicious parties entering or leaving the city. At 9 p.m. every night the bridge was closed. Theoretically no one could leave Washington, and no one could come in. Of course, now that the war was over no sergeant wanted to be severe on citizens, but a soldier had to be careful.

It was about 10:45 p.m. when Cobb heard hoofbeats approaching in the darkness. A dark man with a black mustache rode into the cone of light around the sentry box and one of the sentries put a hand on the rein and held the horse.

"Who are you, sir?" said Sergeant Cobb.

"My name is Booth." Cobb noted that he had a fine smile.

"Where are you from?"

"The city."

"Where are you going?"

"I am going home, to Charles County."

"What town?"

"Close to Beantown, but I do not live in the town."

"Why are you out so late? You know the rules. No one is allowed past this point after nine o'clock."

"That is new to me. You see, I had to go somewhere first and I thought that I would have the moon to go home by."

Sergeant Cobb studied the rider and rubbed his chin. "Go ahead," he said. He watched the little mare pick her dainty way over the planks until he could no longer see her.

A few minutes later Cobb heard a second horse. He came out of the sentry box and saw a young boy, whose horse looked abused.

"Who are you?" said Cobb.

"My name is Smith."

"Ah, yes. Where are you bound for?"

"Home."

"What town?"

"White Plains."

"How is it that you are out so late?"

Herold gave a ribald reply.

Cobb brought him up close to the sentry box, took a good look and told him to be off.

A few minutes later a third horseman came into view. The sentry grinned at the sergeant. "We're doing a good business tonight."

Before Cobb had a chance to ask questions, the third rider asked one. "Tell me," said John Fletcher, "did a man on a roan horse cross a few minutes ago?"

Cobb nodded. "Yes," he said. "He has gone across."
"Did he tell you his name?"
"Yes, Smith."
"Smith? Can I cross?"
"You can cross, but you cannot return."

Fletcher turned his horse and headed back into Washington City. He was angry. He stopped at Murphy's Stable on the slight chance that his horse had been left there. It hadn't, but the stableman told Fletcher that the President had been killed and Seward was dying. Fletcher felt little interest in the news. He had lost a horse and he knew old man Naylor would blame him. He resolved to go to police headquarters and register a complaint.

Eleven p.m.

From 10:15 p.m. — when it happened — until 11 p.m. official Washington was in a state of inert panic. True, General Christopher C. Augur, in command of all the troops in the District, had sent mounted patrols out, but they were running helter-skelter. No one had sealed off the bridges and roads leading out of Washington. No one, in spite of the fact that John Wilkes Booth had been identified by dozens of persons in the theater as the murderer, had sent a policeman to his hotel room.

Augur was afraid to do anything without instructions from Stanton, and the Secretary of War, for the moment, was frozen with fright. He had the fixed notion that the South was making a last desperate bid for victory by instituting terror in the capital of the North. He saw this thing as a broad Confederate plot which had only begun to unfold. In the light of his experience Stanton was eminently justified. His department had contended throughout the war with real plots — high-level Confederate plots — some of them fantastic.

The man who moved first was Major A. C. Richards, Superintendent of the metropolitan Washington police. He had been in

the audience at Ford's Theatre and had seen Booth jump from the President's Box. The major had left the theater, tried to locate the guard John F. Parker and, not finding him, hurried back to police headquarters. He assembled the night detective squad and ordered them out to bring in witnesses to the assassination. He sent a message to Augur, explaining what his men were doing and assuring the general that any witnesses who had pertinent information would be sent to him at once.

At Rullman's Hotel, the gaiety at the bar was silenced. The bartender had just announced the news. At a corner table, Mike O'Laughlin and three companions from Baltimore shook their heads in a drunken daze. Three of them could not believe the news. Mike could. And he could guess the name of the assassin.

MAJOR RATHBONE, who sat in the Petersen parlor with Mrs. Lincoln, Robert, and the Misses Harris and Keene, suddenly fell unconscious from loss of blood and was taken home. For the rest of the night, Robert either sat with his mother or stood behind the head of the bed looking down at his father's face. The narrow hall was heavy with the tramp of boots and, from outside, the roars of the crowd could be heard and the cursing of cavalry officers trying to clear the street.

In the dim parlor Mrs. Lincoln sat staring at the ruddy coals in the grate. Now and then she looked for assurance to the two women who flanked her. But, when the assurance had been given, men would walk in and gravely offer their condolences, as though the President were already dead. This led to wild outbursts of grief and requests to "take me inside to my husband." When she was permitted in the small bedroom, she looked, screamed and fainted. The Reverend Dr. Phineas Gurley, with mutton-chop whiskers quivering, uttered words of encouragement which he did not feel. Each time Mrs. Lincoln made the trip to the sickroom, the doctors were warned and placed fresh napkins under the President's head. Once she stood looking down at him, supported on both sides. The tears had made dry furrows in her face powder. "Live!" she cried. "You must live!" She turned to the doctors. "Bring Tad. He will speak to Tad. He loves him so."

Back in the parlor, she spoke aloud to herself: "Why did he not shoot me instead of my husband? I have tried to be so careful of him, fearing something would happen, and his life seemed to be more precious now than ever." Her tone changed and she spoke imperiously: "I must go with him!" Then a loud demand: "How can it be so!" Robert crouched before her, holding her hand and murmuring: "Mother, please put your trust in God and all will be well."

Dr. Robert King Stone, the Lincoln family physician, arrived. The doctors told him their findings. He washed his hands; then, sitting on the bed facing Lincoln, he lifted the head and examined the bullet hole. He probed a moment, studied the eyes, now bloodshot, and pinched the cheek lightly.

"This case," he said, "is hopeless. The President will die. There is no positive limit to the duration of his life; he is tenacious and he will resist." He arose. "But death will close the scene," he said.

Technically Leale was still in charge of the case and, when Dr. Taft returned to the bedroom and asked permission to give a mixture of brandy and water to the patient, Leale said no. It might induce strangulation. Doctors Stone and Barnes were in the back parlor, and Taft conferred with them. He came back and said that it was their opinion that it might help the patient.

"I will grant the request," said Leale, "if you will at first try by pouring only a very small quantity into the President's mouth."

Taft measured off about a third of a teaspoonful, parted the patient's lips and watched the liquid run into the mouth. The President did not swallow. At once there was a laryngeal obstruction and partial suffocation. Leale pushed Dr. Taft aside, opened the mouth and pulled at the base of the tongue. In thirty seconds breathing resumed.

The doctors held a conference and agreed that Surgeon General Barnes should take charge of the case. But young Doctor Leale, still youthful enough to have more heart than head, decided to sit with Mr. Lincoln until the end and to render whatever help he might. As the doctors talked, Leale wrote a note: "Left side of patient's face begins to twitch. The mouth is pulled sharply to left in a jeer. After 15 minutes, it stops."

MEANWHILE, the man responsible for this was riding his mare up Good Hope Hill on the Maryland shore. At the top of the hill a Mr. Polk Gardner, on his way to Washington City and not at all sure that he would be permitted to cross the bridge, stopped his horse. In the clear moonlight he saw a rider coming toward him, trying to prod his mount into running up the grade.

The rider came abreast of Mr. Gardner, stopped and said: "Good evening. Can you tell me if a horseman passed ahead of me?"

Gardner said he had been on the road an hour, and had seen no one riding away from Washington City.

"Does not the road to Marlboro turn to the right a ways down here?"

"No," said Gardner. "You keep to the straight road."

"Thank you." Booth pounded off into the darkness. If he was being pursued, any information Gardner might give would send the patrols running off in the direction of Marlboro instead of toward Surrattsville.

He pressed on until he heard hoofbeats behind him. He moved the mare into a stand of trees. The rider went by and Booth came out yelling, "Halt!" It was David Herold, and for the rest of the ride into Surrattsville the two had a lot to tell each other. The actor was certain that he had killed Lincoln instantaneously, with the laughter of hundreds ringing in his ears.

Herold said that he was sure that Paine had killed the Secretary of State because while he was waiting below a colored boy ran out yelling murder.

Booth was now in bad and steady pain and he asked Herold to switch mounts with him. The mare had a bouncy walk and a rocking-horse trot. They switched, and continued on their way. They talked of the guns and whisky at Surrattsville and they talked of using a ferry north of Port Tobacco in case Atzerodt did not escape. But most of all they talked of how they had crippled the North, when all was almost lost. Booth expected that every loyal Southerner would be eternally grateful to him.

FOR THE NEXT eight hours, the United States was run by a dictator. In the back parlor of the Petersen house, Edwin Mc-

Masters Stanton sat with the country under his thumb. He had the dictator's gift for quick, and sometimes erroneous, decisions. In all, he did as well as anyone could have — perhaps better.

He convened a special court of inquiry, with Justice Cartter of the Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia administering the oath to witnesses and Stanton himself questioning them. Generals and senior officers were his messengers. Cabinet members took his orders. The steady stream of witnesses to the crime matched the steady stream of soldiers coming and going. When Stanton moved, he moved fast.

He ordered guards placed around the homes of all Cabinet members and ranking officials. He ordered the confiscation of Ford's Theatre and the arrest of "every human being" in its service. He sent an officer to alert the Chief Engineer of the Washington Fire Brigade. Stanton expected mass arson after mass killing.

He announced to General Augur that this plot had a broad base — that the assassins were hirelings of the Confederacy — and that hundreds of terrorists were in Washington City this night. He wanted 150 policemen, 500 military policemen, the United States Secret Service, the spies of the Bureau of Military Justice and the 8000 soldiers in encampments in and around Washington to be ordered out at once to seek out and arrest these terrorists. It did not occur to Stanton or Augur that these soldiers, at large with visions of rapid promotion and high cash rewards, could open a reign of terror in the city.

The witnesses were fearful and many who had come into the room sure of the facts answered whisperingly that they did not remember. Stanton, his vest open, peering over the tops of his glasses, was busy and impatient. He fired questions, listened to stammering answers, wrote telegrams, denied requests, ordered arrests, paced the floor, stroked his perfumed beard and brusquely dismissed witnesses.

Like scores of others, the actor Harry Hawk said: "I believe to the best of my knowledge that it was John Wilkes Booth." Then he was shaken by the enormity of the crime and said: "Still, I am not positive that it was him. I only had one glance at him as he was rushing towards me with a dagger. . . . After I ran up a

flight of stairs, I turned and exclaimed: 'My God! That's John Booth!'"

Harry Phillips, one of the men who was to have sung "All Honor to Our Soldiers," testified that he had asked Harry Hawk, "Are you certain it was Wilkes Booth?" And Hawk had said, "I could say it if I was on my deathbed."

The parade of witnesses all said "Booth." A soldier who recorded the interrogations in shorthand said later, "In fifteen minutes I had testimony enough to hang Wilkes Booth higher than ever Haman hung."

But no word went out from the Petersen house to apprehend Booth. Many have read into this an assent to the assassination on the part of Stanton. There is no evidence to support this. The opposite is true. Stanton had always felt protective toward the President. Now, when his fears had been realized, when he saw the results of withholding the services of Major Eckert as bodyguard, when he stood beside two beds and looked down at Seward and at Lincoln, his mind refused to accept the fact that the majesty of the United States Government had been affronted by one man, an actor. To him, Booth was small game. Stanton's function, as he saw it, was to stop the *pending* assassinations rather than to apprehend the perpetrators of the Lincoln shooting.

In support of his suspicion of a widespread plot, the commercial telegraph system went dead at 10:30 p.m. Major Eckert and Stanton saw this as a plot to isolate Washington City from the rest of the North. Both agreed that a large band of men must be working together. At the same time, Eckert decided that his U. S. Army wires must have been tapped and so, when Stanton wanted to send a message to a garrison in the District of Columbia, Eckert dispatched it by way of Old Point, Virginia. In effect, Mr. Stanton was at pains to outwit men who did not exist.

At 11:45 p.m. the first order to apprehend went out from General Augur. This was ninety minutes after the shooting, and Booth's name was not mentioned. Augur notified Colonel Nichols: "I have sent to arrest all persons attempting to leave the city by all approaches. Have telegraphed to troops on the upper Potomac to arrest all suspicious persons — also to Gnl. Slough at Alexandria

and Gnl. Morris at Baltimore.... No clew has yet been found...."

Colonel Thompson, at Darnestown, was ordered by Stanton to have his men patrol the area north of Washington City. THE ASSASSINS ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE ESCAPED TOWARD MARYLAND, he wired. But just before midnight he sent a message to General Slough in Alexandria: IT IS NOT KNOWN IN WHICH DIRECTION THE ASSASSIN HAS ESCAPED.

Alarms went out to Fairfax Courthouse, Winchester, Harper's Ferry, Cumberland, Baltimore, Annapolis, Acquia Creek, Relay House — almost everywhere except on the fat foot of Maryland which lies between the Potomac and the Patuxent. And that's where Booth was.

Perhaps the first official word regarding Booth was contained in a message written in longhand by General Augur and sent to Colonel Gile, Commander, Reserve Corps, Washington, ordering him to detail an officer to search the train leaving for Baltimore April 15 and to "arrest, if found, J. Wilkes Booth and other parties whom you may deem it for the interest of the service to apprehend."

Mr. Stanton persuaded Mr. Welles to issue like instructions to the navy. Steamers were ordered to patrol up and down the Potomac, looking for fugitives close to shore. Commander Parker at Saint Inigoes was ordered to bottle up the mouth of the river. Point Lookout was ordered to stop all vessels proceeding south on the Potomac and to hold all persons aboard until further orders.

Every avenue of escape out of Washington was closed except the Navy Yard Bridge leading to southern Maryland, and no orders were issued about that one because for a long time past it had been closed every night at nine, and the attacks did not occur until 10:15. No one could have left the city that way.

At the commercial telegraph office, Mr. Dwight Hess, manager of Grover's Theatre, left a telegram to be sent to Mr. Grover in New York when service was resumed:

PRESIDENT LINCOLN SHOT TONIGHT IN FORD'S THEATRE. THANK GOD IT WASN'T OURS.

The Final Hours

Midnight

Among the small figures of history, John Fletcher stands as a man of tenacity. At midnight he was still trying to find his horse. He went to the police station on Tenth Street to register a complaint against David Herold and could not understand why the place was full of fashionably attired ladies and gentlemen. He knew that the President had been shot, but had given no further thought to it.

He asked Detective Charles Stone if a roan horse had been picked up. Stone said, "Who are you?" Fletcher told him, and now, in a flash of revelation, the stable foreman began to wonder why Atzerodt wanted his horse made ready as late as 10 p.m. and why Herold had panicked and run off twenty-five minutes later when Fletcher asked him to get off his horse.

Stone said that a horse had been picked up, and that he would accompany Fletcher to General Augur's headquarters, where they were trying to identify it. Augur had returned from another conference with Stanton, and sat at his desk. Stone told him that the stableman had rented a roan which was still out and the general asked if Fletcher remembered the name of the renter.

"I do," said Fletcher. "His name is Herold and he is young, not more than twenty-one or two, he looks like a boy, and I can tell you that I followed him to the Navy Yard Bridge before I lost him."

There Augur had the key to the conspiracy. But he shook his head sadly. The description did not fit John Wilkes Booth, and Booth was the man that Augur wanted.

The general nodded toward a flat saddle and bridle lying on a chair. "Do you know anything about that?" he said.

Fletcher walked over and fingered the leather. "I do," he said, and described the horse that had worn this gear: "A big brown horse, blind of one eye; a heavy horse with a heavy tail."

Augur was now interested. An hour ago, a big brown blind horse had been picked up on East Capitol near Fifteenth Street in a farm district. But he did not connect it with the assassins. He could not imagine desperate killers on brewery horses.

"Who rode this horse?"

Fletcher said he could get the name from his stable records. He had stabled the horse that wore these trappings. And he knew the little man with the funny name who had sometimes ridden it. But he pointed out that this man had not used the horse tonight. Who had ridden him tonight Fletcher had no idea. The detective accompanied him to the stable and Fletcher returned with the name of George Atzerodt. This meant nothing to Augur.

Now the general had the names Booth — Herold — Atzerodt. He needed only the name of Lewis Paine, who had ridden and abandoned the blind horse tonight, to complete the roster of the conspirators. But Augur felt that he was wasting time with the stableman, and excused him. Had he chatted with the Irishman a little longer he might have learned that Atzerodt and Herold had a friend named Booth, and that quite often these men rode to Surrattsville.

GEORGE ATZERODT, drunk and tired and apprehensive, got aboard a horsecar bound for the Navy Yard. He was on his way to the store where his friend Washington Briscoe worked. Briscoe happened to be on the car and he told Atzerodt that he couldn't have any guests that night because the owner was there.

Both men got off at the Navy Yard. Atzerodt asked once more for lodging. The answer was no. The conspirator looked sad. "I will go back to the Kimmel House," he said. This was a nickname for Pennsylvania House, the four-and-five-men-to-a-room hotel where he had stayed before. He had no desire to join the other conspirators at the Navy Yard Bridge.

IT WAS a night of frustrations and heartache. In Augur's quarters, a young captain walked in and asked for permission to lead a mounted squad to capture the conspirators. The general had little sympathy with inspirational heroes. "No," he said. "Permission is denied. You will remain here, for whatever emergency duty may be assigned to you."

The captain remained. Thus another opportunity was lost, for this was Captain D. H. L. Gleason, the man to whom Louis Wiechman had reported that a plot was being devised against the President at Surratt's boardinghouse. Gleason knew that Booth and the other conspirators sometimes met at a tavern in Surrattsville. But Augur had refused his offer. And Gleason volunteered no information.

At 12:30 a.m. telegraph service was restored. The wires, it was learned, had not been cut. Two wires in the main battery had been crossed and all service had been shorted. Government officials still insisted this was a planned Confederate move.

IT WAS a few minutes past midnight when Booth and Herold passed the crossroads at Surrattsville. The air was chill, the moon bright as they approached the tavern. A single light burned in the barroom. Herold dismounted and went inside. Booth was in pain and he shifted this way and that in the saddle.

Mr. Lloyd was on a couch, sleeping. The bar was empty. "Mr. Lloyd," Herold said, shaking him, "for God's sake make haste and get those things."

Lloyd sat up slowly. He was drunk. "All right," he said. He shuffled off upstairs and got two carbines, the field glasses, one cartridge box. He stopped behind the bar and drew a quart of whisky.

Outside, Herold told Booth: "He has no brandy. Only whisky."

Booth drank deeply, then asked Lloyd, "Is there a doctor in this country? I have broken my leg."

"Doc Hoxton is down the road," Lloyd said, as he stood wavering on the lawn. "But he don't practice. Told me so himself."

"We killed the President," Booth said, "and Seward."

If he looked for applause, or awe, there was none of it. Lloyd

stared at him stupidly. Herold handed the tavernkeeper a silver dollar. The horses swung and were gone.

The pain forced Booth to change his plans. Instead of riding eighteen miles south to Port Tobacco and escaping across the Potomac to Virginia, he decided to go to Dr. Samuel Mudd, the only physician he knew in the area.

MAJOR James O'Beirne, Provost Marshal of the District of Columbia, had heard the name of Booth so many times that at last he asked the Ford's Theatre people where Mr. Booth lived. They told him the National Hotel. The major ordered Detective William Eaton to take charge of Booth's room and everything in it in the name of the War Department.

In forty-five minutes Eaton was back with the news that no one at the hotel had seen the actor since early the previous evening. With him he brought a trunk, a lot of papers and some letters and effects. The only item of importance was a letter from one Samuel Arnold begging Booth to desist from a complicated plot.

IT WAS well past midnight when Stanton ordered his enforcement subordinates to the Petersen house for a conference. Major Richards of the Washington police attended. So did General Augur, Major O'Beirne, Justice Cartter and Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana.

Stanton announced that he had indisputable proof that Booth had fired the shot from outside the box door. An investigating officer had located the bullet hole in a panel of the door. It was pretty definite, he admitted, that the assassin was John Wilkes Booth, but he wanted no public announcement of this yet.

He asked Dana to send a wire to General Grant at the Philadelphia railroad terminal, telling him that Lincoln had been shot, and to arrange for a special train to bring Grant to Washington. He wrote a note to Chief Justice Salmon Chase that Lincoln was dying and to be ready to administer the oath of office to Vice-President Johnson. He notified Johnson that Lincoln was dying, and sent one of O'Beirne's men, John Lee, to protect him.

When Lee arrived at Kirkwood House, he made a perfunctory

stop at the Vice-President's room, then examined the building from top to bottom. A customer at the bar told him that a suspicious-looking man had taken a room yesterday and had been asking questions about the Vice-President. Mr. Lee asked the night manager to point out the names in the hotel registry of persons he could not vouch for. The man pointed to the name G. Atzerodt and said that he was out. Since Atzerodt had the only key to his room, Lee and the night manager broke down the door.

Lee searched the room carefully. Under a pillow on the bed he found a huge pistol. In the pocket of a black coat he found an Ontario, Canada, bankbook made out to J. Wilkes Booth and showing a balance of $455, a large-scale map of the state of Virginia and a white handkerchief stenciled "Mary R. E. Booth." In a bureau drawer were three boxes of Colt pistol cartridges. Between the bottom sheet and the mattress of the bed he made his last find: a large bowie knife.

One a.m.

At the Petersen house, Stanton held the reins of government as though all his life had been a training ground for this one event. He grasped the news of all that was happening in his fist, and he refused to open it until he was ready. He ordered that no news of the assassination be permitted in any of the military districts of the South. It would be days before Atlanta and Savannah and Mobile knew that Lincoln had been shot.

One of the poignant mistakes he made was ordering Attorney General Speed to draw up a formal note to the Vice-President advising him that President Lincoln had died and asking him to prepare to assume the presidency at once. When it was completed, Stanton read it aloud. He heard a scream, and turned to see Mrs. Lincoln. "Is he dead?" she shrieked. "Oh, is he dead?"

Stanton said that he was merely preparing for a grave eventuality. Mrs. Lincoln, moaning, was led back to the front parlor.

In moments of quiet, the President's breathing could be heard all over the ground floor of the house. Dr. Barnes noted that spasmodic contractions of both forearms had begun. The muscles of the chest became fixed and the patient began to hold his breath in spasms, emitting it in gusty explosions.

Senator Sumner, sitting near the head of the bed, took the President's left hand in his and, bowing his head, began to sob. Seeing this, Robert Lincoln began to weep. Dr. Charles Taft, leaving, said: "It's the saddest death scene I've ever witnessed."

Among those for whom this ordeal was especially difficult was Dr. Leale. He had a professional interest, and a personal interest. The young doctor had idolized Lincoln for a long time, had bought post-card pictures of the President to hang in his room. He had come to stand in front of Ford's Theatre tonight to look upon the face of a man he loved.

Now he was a doctor on a case. A clot formed in the bullet hole every few minutes, and Leale insisted that he would remove it, and no one else. He remained at the bedside, holding the President's hand. Dr. Leale knew that, just before death, reason and recognition often return to a patient for a brief moment. He held Lincoln's hand, as he explained later, so that if reason did come for a moment "he would know, in his blindness, that he was in touch with humanity and had a friend."

At 1:30 a.m. Stanton decided to release the news, through Major General John Adams Dix, Commandant, New York. His message to General Dix described in some detail the attacks on Lincoln and on Seward by an assassin, "whether the same or another," and stated, "It is not probable that the President will live through the night."

Mr. Stanton made a few small errors in his report, but the big one was that he knew the name of the assassin of the President and did not mention it. This prevented the newspapers from broadcasting an alarm for Booth, because it left them with no high official source to attribute the name to. At this hour, every newspaper in Washington and the Associated Press in New York knew that the actor Booth was the man being hunted, but when they saw the Stanton statement most of them decided not to use

Booth's name. A few announced that the "scion of a famous family of actors is being sought."

At military headquarters in Washington, General Augur had completed questioning most of the witnesses. The more he thought about Fletcher's story of the blind horse, the more he thought that the conspirators might be traced through a stable. He ordered fresh patrols of cavalry out to canvass every stable in Washington City. He wanted any stableman who had seen Booth brought to him at once.

Such a man arrived shortly before 2 a.m. He had seen Booth off on a small roan mare at four o'clock. There was a sort of loose partnership in horses, he said, between Booth and a man named John Surratt. It was hard to tell which one owned the horses, because both men used them and they permitted a man named George Atzerodt and another man named David Herold to use them too. And another strange thing: Booth had a big one-eyed gelding which only today he had ordered stabled in the back of Ford's Theatre.

It was then that some unremembered officer on Augur's staff said, in substance: Just a moment. Didn't we get a report on an alleged plot to kidnap President Lincoln some months ago, and wasn't the name Surratt in that report? Didn't a woman named Surratt keep a boardinghouse somewhere nearby? Wouldn't that explain why, with the bridges closed and armed patrols all over the city, we have not been able to find John Wilkes Booth? Couldn't it be that he is hiding right now in Washington City?

Two a.m.

General Augur was still thinking about Booth and the boardinghouse when Police Superintendent Richards made up his mind to raid the place. He had the names of Booth, Herold, Surratt. Richards remembered that the military had issued a confidential report on the Surratt house based on intelligence

given by an informer in the War Department. He asked Detective John A. W. Clarvoe to send a squad to the boardinghouse and bring back Booth and Surratt, if they were there.

In fifteen minutes Clarvoe was standing in front of the darkened house on H Street. He had ten men with him and he posted them around the premises. Then, accompanied by Lieutenant Skippon, Detectives Donaldson and McDevitt and Officer Maxwell, Clarvoe climbed the white stone steps to the parlor floor and pulled the bell.

Wiechman admitted them. He was frightened. He stood with a small lamp, his nightshirt tucked into his trousers, his feet bare.

The detectives searched the house from basement to attic. They questioned Wiechman, Mrs. Surratt, John Holahan and his wife and a frightened Negro woman in the basement. When Wiechman asked Detective Clarvoe the meaning of the search, Clarvoe said: "I will tell you." From his pocket he pulled a piece of collar and a small bow from a tie. The collar was stained orange. "Do you see this blood? This is Abraham Lincoln's blood. Wilkes Booth has murdered the President and John Surratt has assassinated Mr. Seward."

The boarder clapped a hand to his forehead. "Great God!" he moaned. "I see it all now!" He staggered. "Is it really true?"

Wiechman repeated the news to Mrs. Surratt. She raised both hands above her head and said: "My God! You don't tell me so!"

Clarvoe had closely watched the reactions of the landlady and the boarder, and both seemed to him genuinely shocked.

The detectives learned that Mrs. Surratt had not seen her son John for two weeks; she believed him to be in Canada. She had last seen John Wilkes Booth at two o'clock the day before. Wiechman admitted he had not been in the house earlier in the evening. He had been "down the country" with Mrs. Surratt.

The detectives left. They took no prisoners.

IN THE Petersen house Mr. Stanton had lost his temper. Mrs. Lincoln had made one more trip to the deathbed, supported by Miss Harris and Miss Keene. She had leaned across the bed so that her cheek rested on her husband's. At that precise moment the

President expelled an explosive breath, the noise terrified her and she screamed and fell into a dead faint.

Stanton came into the bedroom pointing a finger at the unconscious Mrs. Lincoln. "Take that woman out," he said loudly, "and do not let her in again."

When the room had been cleared, Dr. Barnes ordered the patient to be turned toward the wall. With cotton soaked in alcohol he combed the black matted hair away from the wound. Then, using a silver probe, he tried to locate the bullet. The probe moved inward two inches, and met an obstruction.

He asked his assistant for a long Nélaton probe. It had a tiny white porcelain bulb on the end. This, when inserted, passed the two-inch mark and continued diagonally across the brain. At a depth of four inches it ran into an obstruction. Barnes turned the probe slowly so that segments of whatever the obstruction was would be found. He withdrew it. There was no indication of lead. The other doctors agreed that he had probably contacted a piece of bone which had been blown from the back of the skull by the bullet. The Nélaton probe was tried again, without result. The doctors agreed that no further effort would be made to find the bullet.

LATER, many would say that Andrew Johnson did not want to go to the Petersen house. But when he received the Stanton message to be prepared to take the oath of office, he at once insisted that he was going to see Lincoln. Governor Farwell and Major James O'Beirne opposed it. Farwell said that the future of the Republic was bound up with Johnson now, and that he should remain where he was.

Johnson said he would go anyway. He refused O'Beirne's offer to summon a guard of soldiers. He wanted no carriage — he would walk. So Farwell and O'Beirne accompanied him.

The Vice-President was shown into the bedroom. He stood for a while with his hat in his hand, never taking his eyes from the figure on the bed, not saying anything, not showing any emotion. Then he took Robert's hand and whispered a few words. He stopped in the back parlor to speak to Stanton before going

into the front room, where he took Mrs. Lincoln's hand in his. She looked up at him, whimpering.

Then Johnson walked back to Kirkwood House.

THE MORNING newspapers in the Northern cities were now being made up. The editors were going to press with the biggest, saddest story of the age. Mourning rules were dropped into place by printers and many editors headed the story with the single big word "IMPORTANT!" followed by fifteen to eighteen diminishing headlines. Stories about Mr. Seward's assassination were run beside the main story.

Radical Republican newspapers ripped out editorials which condemned Lincoln's "soft" peace with the South, and in their place went new editorials which mourned the loss of a great man. Cartoons which slandered Lincoln's features were tossed on the composing-room floor. Anti-Lincoln letters from irate readers were killed.

The editors were exasperated. They told their readers about the greatest crime of the nineteenth century, but in the story there was no criminal. They jammed the reopened wires to Washington with questions asking for official confirmation of Booth as the assassin. None came.

The editor of the *National Intelligencer,* who did not know that Booth had tried to give him a news beat in a confession letter, sat down at 2 a.m. to write an editorial about the contradictory rumors.

Three a.m.

Now the nation slept. Tenth Street was deserted. Washington City was quiet. Policemen in fawn helmets yawned at street corners. This hour was the quiet one.

But in the Petersen house Stanton still bustled at his work. He sent a second news bulletin to General Dix in New York. It said,

in part: "Investigation strongly indicates J. Wilkes Booth as the assassin of the President."

The dispatch is significant because it shows that Stanton was beginning to change his mind. Now he had a suspicion that the Federal Government was fighting one man. If the new thesis was correct, then Stanton, with all the majesty and power of the United States Government behind him, was a fool. He had been outwitted, and might continue to be outwitted, by a lone actor. Because of this the Secretary of War would, in the days ahead, insist that this was all part of a huge conspiracy, inspired and approved by the defunct Confederate States Government. He could not admit, even to himself, that he was not battling Davis and Benjamin and Seddon and Stephens. It was big, or Stanton was ridiculous.

General Augur received a report of the raid on Surratt House and forwarded it to Stanton along with the news about the stableman who had serviced Booth's horse, the letter from Sam Arnold to Booth, and other late data including Atzerodt's peculiar behavior at Kirkwood House. For the first time, the tavern at Surrattsville came into focus.

The best news, from Stanton's point of view, was the letter from Sam Arnold to Booth, because that established, beyond argument, that there was a plot and that such a plot had existed for weeks; and that Arnold thought that Booth should not move until he first heard from "R — d."

Four a.m.

THE STEEPLE at Beantown was black against the night sky when John Wilkes Booth and Herold slowed their horses. They were close to the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd, and Booth put on the disguise and the muffler which he had brought along.

Mudd was forty, tall, thin, had a bald forehead, blue eyes and

brick-colored hair and whiskers. He owned a five-hundred-acre farm and worked it. He was influential in the neighborhood of Bryantown, a churchgoer, and a conservative Southerner in his politics.

Booth and Herold walked the sweat off their horses and talked about their plans. The actor wanted to have his leg treated and be gone. Even though they were miles ahead of the news he had created, Booth knew that sooner or later the Mudds would learn that he had killed Lincoln, and if the doctor recognized him he would go to the authorities. Should Federal patrols come this way, they would be here by 7 or 8 a.m.

The actor, right now, was ten miles off his escape route. But if Mudd could fix the leg so that riding would be bearable, they might be able to leave his house at 5 a.m. If they made Port Tobacco by 7:30, they might still be ahead of the Federals and, if Atzerodt was waiting, they would be moving out into Pope's Creek by 8 a.m.

Of one thing Booth was certain: when they reached Virginia territory, and the great news was known, every loyal Southerner would give them shelter and do them honor. John Wilkes Booth never doubted this, nor could he afford to, because once the civilian prop was removed from his future he was dancing on air. Herold bowed to the superior wisdom of his worldly friend. It did not occur to either of them that any Southerner could or would greet them with contempt.

They swung off the road and up to Dr. Mudd's house, agreeing that Davey Herold should do most of the talking. The boy dismounted. Somewhere a hound dog bayed and other dogs took up the cry. Herold knocked. Dr. Mudd, in bed, resolved that whoever it was could knock twice more if the matter was important. Herold obliged. The doctor came downstairs in his nightshirt, holding a candle, and asked who was knocking.

"Two strangers riding to Washington."

Mudd opened the door and, in the pale light, saw a young man. His horse was tied to a tree and he was holding the reins of another horse on which a silent, bearded man sat. The young man said his friend had taken a bad fall and that his leg was hurt.

Handing the candle to Herold, the doctor helped the other man off the horse and up the stone step into the parlor. He assisted him to a sofa and lit two lamps. He did not try to pull the boot off, but pressed both sides of the foot and ankle until he felt a mass and saw the patient jump.

"I don't think you will get to Washington tonight," he said. "I would suggest that you come upstairs and let me have a look at that leg."

The bearded man nodded and Herold picked up one of the kerosene lamps and Mudd picked up the other. Between them, they assisted Booth up the stairs.

In the guest room were two beds. Mudd helped the patient to fall on the near one. He stood beside the bed, looking at the patient's face. The man kept the muffler up on his chin, although the house was warm. The young fellow stood in the doorway.

Dr. Mudd tried to pull the boot off, but it wouldn't come. The man raised his head off the pillow. "Please make haste," he said. "I want to get home and have this attended to by my regular physician."

The doctor went downstairs and glued some heavy pasteboards together until he had several firm splints. When he got back upstairs he took surgical scissors and cut off the man's boot and removed the sock. A lump of purpled flesh showed about two inches above the foot. Doctor Mudd found a simple fracture of the tibia.

At 4:45 a.m. he had finished his examination and applied the splints. The patient then complained of a pain in his back which caused him trouble with his breathing. He was sure, he said, that he could not be moved right now. This seemed to startle the young man in the doorway, but he said nothing.

"You can stay here," the doctor said. Mudd had good powers of observation. His mental notes were: Man five feet ten inches high, pretty well made. Weight 150 or 160 pounds. Hair black and curly and worn long. A full forehead and fair skin. Seems to be accustomed to an indoor rather than an outdoor life.

Mudd invited Herold to have breakfast with him. At the table the young man said that his name was Henston and that the

injured man was Mr. Tyser. He prattled on, telling the doctor that he was well acquainted in this part of Maryland. Mudd found him guileless and superficial.

After breakfast the doctor was about to go out into the fields when the young man asked if he could borrow a razor. The doctor asked what the blade was to be used for, since he had noticed that the boy had no beard. Herold said that his friend upstairs would like to shave.

The doctor gave him a razor, though his suspicions were aroused. Upstairs, when the muffler had slipped a bit, he had seen part of a full graying beard — and a coal-black mustache. It did not seem reasonable that a man in pain, in a stranger's house, should suddenly decide to remove a well-grown beard or mustache. Dr. Mudd went out into the fields to direct the day's work.

STANTON finished his third press bulletin to General Dix and, because it supported his "huge conspiracy" feelings, was pleased with it. It was sent at 4:44 a.m.:

> . . . It is now ascertained . . . that two assassins were engaged in the horrible crime, Wilkes Booth being the one that shot the President, the other a companion of his whose name is not known, but whose description is so clear that he can hardly escape. It appears from a letter found in Booth's trunk that the murder was planned before the 4th of March, but fell through then because the accomplice backed out until "Richmond could be heard from. . . ."

This was, in a manner of speaking, a defensive press release. When Stanton wrote, "It appears from a letter found in Booth's trunk that the murder was planned before the 4th of March," he lied. There is nothing in Sam Arnold's letter of March 27 that bears on Inauguration Day. The only way that the Secretary of War could have been reminded of a period prior to March 4 was if General Augur had told him *now* that Booth and Surratt and Atzerodt had been named in a presidential kidnap plot prior to March 4 (by Wiechman and Captain Gleason) and that the War Department had done nothing about it.

Because Arnold's letter was dated from Hookstown, Baltimore County, Stanton alerted the Baltimore Department to locate Samuel Arnold and arrest him in the Seward assassination. Arnold was now working as a clerk at Fort Monroe, in Virginia.

Stanton was at last convinced that Booth had escaped from Washington City. He sent for maps and called a conference of ranking officers. It was late and almost ludicrous to be examining the bars of the municipal cage now, but it was done. All of the city exits were re-examined and the only one still unwatched, unpatrolled, led to the peninsula called southern Maryland.

One of the officers reminded the Secretary of War that the blind horse had been found on East Capitol, almost on the route to the Navy Yard Bridge and southern Maryland. If Booth went that way, the military minds reasoned, he would be bottled up in the peninsula unless he could get back to Virginia. His best chance to do that would be in the region of Piscataway, Maryland. A troop of cavalry was ordered out to patrol the Piscataway area.

Stanton asked for a picture of Booth and someone got one from the files at Ford's Theatre. It was a picture of Edwin Booth.

Five a.m.

A DARK STAIN spread around the President's head. The Surgeon General announced that Lincoln had sustained a fresh hemorrhage. A new pillow was placed on the bed. The hair around the wound was cleaned and cotton batting was pressed against it. After that, the President's breathing appeared to be more regular.

Gray light began to swell against the bedroom windows. In the room the gas light seemed to pale. Dr. Barnes sat at the head of the bed, trying to take a pulse from the carotid artery. Halfway to the feet of the patient, Dr. Leale sat, still holding Lincoln's hand, now and then checking the pulse in the flaccid wrist, sometimes getting a count and sometimes getting nothing. On

the wall side of the bed, Dr. Stone sat, as helpless as the others.

Robert Lincoln was still standing behind the head of the bed, looking down at his father. Secretary of the Navy Welles, fat and solemn, sat with a hand on one knee, staring at this man who was, in effect, almost the last soldier to die in the war.

Death was roosting in the room now. Everyone present knew it. The President's right eye was swollen and purpled. The legs were as cold as marble. Breathing stopped for long periods, and after a few seconds the doctors would pull out watches to note the exact time of death. Suddenly, the lungs would burst with air, the heart would dance with life, and the President would groan through half-opened lips, as though, in a dream, he was walking down the White House stairs asking: "Who is dead?"

Mrs. Lincoln sat quietly with Laura Keene and Clara Harris. They could hear the deep voices of the doctors in the bedroom and now and then the thin voice of Mr. Stanton asking for something. The thud of boots and the clank of spurs never seemed to stop. For days, it seemed, soldiers had been walking through the hall outside this room. For the rest of her life Mrs. Lincoln would dread the sight and sound of them.

Six a.m.

C STREET glistened with mist. The "Kimmel," or Pennsylvania House, where George Atzerodt had finally found a bed, looked a little bit more dismal than usual as he came out and started up Sixth Street toward the Mall. He was sleepy, dirty and penniless. He had a hangover and felt sick, soul and bone.

"Mr. Atzerodt. What brings you out so early?"

The carriage maker jumped. It was a colored boy from the hotel.

Atzerodt's grin was forlorn. "Well," he said, "I have got business."

Mr. Atzerodt had business all right. He wanted to hide. He

had thought of many places, and now he had made up his mind to return to the little town where he had first started in America. He knew that this was not a good hiding place but he reasoned that, no matter where he hid, the news would reach that place and they would come and get him.

He would walk westward, through Washington City, through Georgetown, until he got to his little town. There the people liked George Atzerodt. They knew him as a harmless buffoon, a beaming, perspiring drunkard. He would hide there, listening and laughing and maybe drinking until some men came for him.

In Surratt House Louis Wiechman had breakfast with Mr. Holahan. Wiechman was talkative and self-righteous. If the police had listened to him, they would have raided the place a long time ago. He had suspected what was going on. Thank God that he, Louis Wiechman, had not become part of it; had, in fact, reported his suspicions months ago.

Today he was going to do his duty as any self-respecting citizen should. He was going down to police headquarters right after breakfast to offer his services. He would help the police to track down his dearest friend, John Surratt, no matter whether the trail led to Surrattsville or to Canada.

Holahan might have reminded Louis that he had heard more secessionist talk from him than from the others in the house. He didn't.

Wiechman finished the breakfast Mrs. Surratt had prepared for him and then walked off to the police station. He had an excellent memory and he could quote old dialogue as though it had been uttered yesterday. He would talk and talk and talk until the police tired of listening.

He was a hanging witness.

Old Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, had sat with his President as long as he could. He needed a breath of air. He put on his coat and fluffed his white whiskers outside the lapels, jammed a broad-brimmed felt hat over his long brown curls and walked outside.

The chatting sentries on the walk snapped to attention. Mr. Welles walked slowly around the block, noting that small groups of people huddled against the buildings in the drizzle. They were waiting for news. Final news.

They recognized the old gentleman and looked at him expectantly, but he said nothing. A few asked timidly: "Is there no hope?"

He said, "No," and walked on. Once he said, "The President can live but a short time." He was affected by the colored people, who stared at him, unable to ask the question except with their eyes. There were more colored people standing this deathwatch than white. On some faces he saw the varnished furrows of old tears. He was so moved that he stopped to tell one group that it would be better now if the President did not live.

AT ONE of the police precincts, the man nobody missed showed up. John F. Parker, absent from duty since ten o'clock the night before, walked into the station with his contribution to justice. He had a prostitute by the arm and he told the sergeant of her crimes. The sergeant shrugged and refused to book her. She was ordered to get out of town.

Parker did not tell the sergeant where he had been all night, and the sergeant did not ask. Parker did not inquire about the President, nor did he offer to file a report on the assassination. The sergeant advised him to go home and get some sleep. Parker left. He remained a policeman in good standing for three more years. He was not tried and no charges were filed against him.

Seven a.m.

JOHN WILKES BOOTH slept soundly, the painful leg forgotten, in Dr. Mudd's house in Bryantown. Downstairs, David Herold fell asleep in a chair. Sixteen miles away, in a patch of Washington woods, Lewis Paine crouched, wondering how to

find his way out of the city, and where Booth had gone. In Georgetown, George Atzerodt sold his gun for ten dollars. Now, if he could find a place in this farm land where drinks were sold, he could buy one.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S right eye was black. He began to moan and his breathing became shallow and swift. His black hair was in disorder and there was a slight ruddiness on the cheekbones. The big veinous hands were composed on the white sheet.

Surgeon General Barnes looked at the other doctors, felt the cold skin of the patient, and asked an officer to bring Mrs. Lincoln to the bedroom. Robert Lincoln heard the words and buried his face in his hands. Stanton came in and stood at the foot of the bed, his hat in his hand.

They brought Mrs. Lincoln in, tottering, and she looked at her husband. Then, without a word, she was led out of the room. Secretary Welles came into the room, sat, and then stood again. The President was in his death struggle and at intervals he tried to breathe; with each effort he pulled the cheeks inward but the lips remained closed.

Surgeon General Barnes studied his watch. Dr. Phineas Gurley, the President's pastor, came in from the front parlor and looked at the thin red rug. Dr. Leale saw the chest heave upward, hold the position and then relax. The time was twenty-two minutes and ten seconds past 7 a.m.

Dr. Barnes stood, waiting for the next breath. It did not come. He peeled an eyelid back, looked closely, and pulled down the sheet and listened with his ear against the chest. He remained in this attitude for some time, then he straightened up, reached into his vest pocket and withdrew two silver coins. He placed them on the President's eyes.

Secretary Stanton broke the silence. "Now," he said, "he belongs to the ages." He clapped his hat on his head. Someone whispered that Dr. Gurley would say a prayer. The hat came off. As the minister began the slow, soft prayer, Robert left the room to tell his mother.

Leale performed the last loving services. He composed the arms

of the man, removed the silver coins, smoothed the eyelids gently closed and replaced the coins. Then he pulled the white sheet over the head.

Dr. Gurley knelt on the floor and said: "Let us pray." The men of the Cabinet were standing with bowed heads as Robert led his mother into the room. She tore loose from him and threw herself on her husband and cried: "Oh, my God! I have given my husband to die!" She was lifted from the bed and partly carried from the room.

Dr. Gurley was still praying. Dr. Leale got his uniform coat and walked out. He was in a haze of fatigue and knew only vaguely that he was walking in heavy rain. He put his hand to his head and noticed that he was hatless. Then he remembered his hat was still in Ford's Theatre.

The doctor did not go back. He wanted to walk. He was walking — he knew not how long — when he heard the first deep toll of the bell. It came from nearby and the bass sound reverberated a long time before it died in resonance and a second toll sounded. In a few minutes he heard a higher-pitched bell. Then another, and another, and soon, as he walked, the rain dripping off his forehead, he was surprised to learn that Washington City had many bronze tongues.

The bells were tolling everywhere, it seemed, and people came out on the street, heedless of rain, to listen. They were trying to believe something which was hard to believe. Some looked sick. Some were grim. Some swore loud oaths to a wet sky. Some wept. Military patrols called a halt to stand and listen.

Telegraph keys began to chatter north, east and west, and bells began to toll in Boston and Chicago and in Springfield, Massachusetts, as well as in Springfield, Illinois.

Gentle men were trying to lead Mrs. Lincoln out of the house, and she kept trying to squirm from their grasp. She was shouting: "Oh, why did you not tell me he was dying!" As she was led down the steps of the stoop, she saw the brick façade of Ford's Theatre across the street. "Oh!" she screamed. "That dreadful house! That dreadful house!"

Cannon all over the nation began to boom every thirty minutes

all day and all night. Strangest of all, millions of people who had not cared much about Lincoln one way or the other now discovered that they loved this man. The tears were universal. In New York, a red-eyed man, sober, stood on a corner talking to no one in particular and he said: "If he could just come back for one moment, I know what he'd say; he'd say, 'Forgive him — he knew not what he did.'"

In Coles County, Illinois, the news came and farmers hitched up their buckboards and drove en masse across cold-looking fields to the little place where Sarah Bush lived; she was Lincoln's stepmother. They stood on the doorsill and they told her the tidings and her old leathery face did not change when she said: "I knowed when he went away that he would never come back."

Across the street from the White House, on the far side of Pennsylvania Avenue, the plain people waited to say good-bye. They were Negroes mostly, and they formed a thick dark ribbon on the walk. The cold rain stitched their backs but they did not move.

The rain beat hard against the White House portico and, inside, the Secretary of the Navy shook drops from his hat. He looked up and saw little Tad Lincoln, with strained dignity, coming down the stairs.

"Mr. Welles," he said, "who killed my father?"

Postscript

PERHAPS, like me, you wonder what happened to some of the people who played a part in this day of April 14, 1865. I will tell you the little that I know:

Andrew Johnson lived ten years. William H. Seward recovered, and died in 1872 of natural causes. Stanton was forced from his post by Johnson and begged to be appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States. The appointment arrived as he was on his deathbed in 1869.

The owner of Ford's Theatre, John T. Ford, was thrown into prison, but was later released for lack of evidence. The Government confiscated his theater, but he forced it to pay $100,000 for the house. Twenty-eight years later, the floors of Ford's collapsed, killing more than a score of Government workers. Today, rebuilt, the theater is a national museum.

George Atzerodt was caught, tried and hanged. So were Lewis Paine and David Herold. Booth was cornered in a Virginia barn and shot. This is how it happened:

The actor was sure that if he could get on Virginia soil he would be welcomed as the hero of the century. Instead, he was in pain with a broken and infected leg, and after leaving Dr. Mudd's he and David hid out in swamps by day, traveling only by night. Most Southerners turned him away. Samuel Cox was one who didn't. He supplied Booth and Herold with food and blankets for a week. In late April they crossed the Potomac into Virginia, where the family of Richard H. Garrett hid them in a barn near Port Royal.

By now Union patrols were ranging all of the roads as far south as Richmond and, at 2 a.m. on April 26, Colonel E. J. Conger and twenty-eight men tracked them down. Herold came out of the barn frightened, with hands up. Booth refused to. Conger's men set fire to the building. Booth yelled, "Well, my brave boys, you can prepare a stretcher for me." As the flames crept up the walls, Booth cried, "One more stain on the old banner." From behind the barn, a trigger-happy soldier named Boston Corbett fired through a crack in the boards and shot Booth in the back of the neck. He was dragged from the flames to a back porch where he identified himself and his diary, whispered words of encouragement for his mother, and died.

There were stories which persisted for years that it wasn't Booth who was killed. But it was. Years later, Booth's family identified the remains and buried him in the family plot near Baltimore.

Mrs. Mary E. Surratt was tried, convicted and hanged for conspiracy. Dr. Samuel Mudd was tried for conspiracy and convicted. So were Sam Arnold, Mike O'Laughlin, and Ned Spangler of Ford's Theatre. All four were sentenced to Albany (New York)

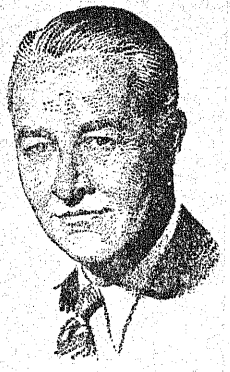
Penitentiary. Secretary Stanton, who felt that they had got off lightly, removed them to Dry Tortugas Prison, off Key West, Florida. There, in August 1867, yellow fever broke out and when the prison doctor died Dr. Mudd volunteered his services. He saved the lives of many soldiers and prisoners, but Mike O'Laughlin died. The officers of the post appealed for a pardon for Mudd and it was granted in February 1869. Arnold and Spangler were freed with him. Realizing that Ned Spangler was dying of tuberculosis, Dr. Mudd took him home to Bryantown and cared for him until he died.

John Lloyd and Louis Wiechman became the Government's star witnesses against Mrs. Surratt. Lloyd claimed he was threatened with death unless he testified against her. Wiechman claimed that Stanton promised him a job for his work as a witness, and for a time he worked in the Philadelphia customs office. He was later fired. When he died, he kept repeating that he had told the truth at the trial of Mrs. Surratt.

John Surratt ran to Canada, thence to Europe, and was discovered ten years later working as a Zouave forty miles from the Vatican. He was brought back, tried and eventually released. He made money giving lectures on the assassination of Lincoln.

Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln, perhaps the most pathetic of all the people who figured in this day, was certified as a "lunatic" in Cook County, Illinois, two years after the death of her husband. She was released a year later, and spent the last months of her life (1882) in a darkened room, dressed in widow's weeds.

Tad Lincoln died in 1871. The last of the survivors, Robert Todd Lincoln, died in 1926, at the age of eighty-three.

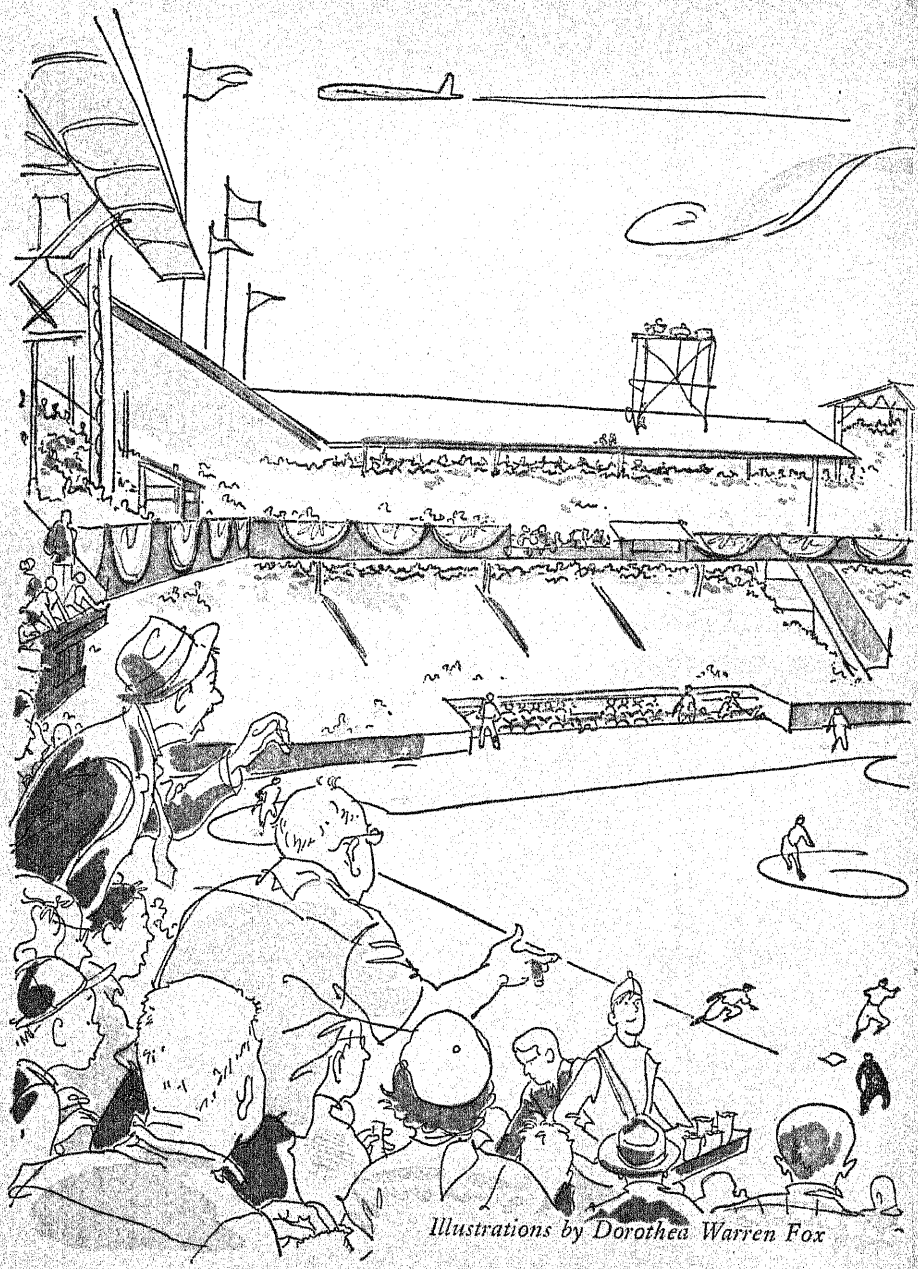


Jim Bishop

JIM BISHOP, author of *The Mark Hellinger Story, The Glass Crutch* and *Parish Priest,* was born in Jersey City in 1907, the son of a police lieutenant. His first job was driving a milk wagon. Discouraged because the horse seemed to know more about the business than he did, he confessed to his father that his ambition was to be a writer. His father was not impressed by his qualifications, but he helped him get a job as copy boy on the New York *Daily News.*

Bishop decided to become "the best-educated journalist in America," in terms of his profession, and since then has held virtually every kind of editorial job on leading newspapers and magazines. Now executive editor of *Catholic Digest,* he is writing the biography of television star Jackie Gleason.

THE YEAR THE YANKEES LOST THE PENNANT



Illustrations by Dorothea Warren Fox



The Year The Yankees Lost The Pennant

A condensation of the book by

DOUGLASS WALLOP

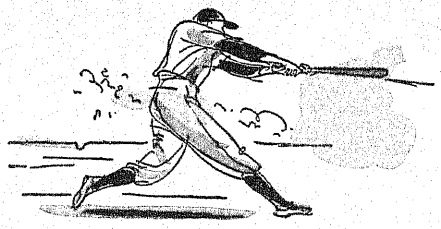
"The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant," copyright 1954 by John Douglass Wallop, is published at $2.95 by W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 101 Fifth Ave., New York 3, N. Y.

IT ALL BEGAN on the night Joe Boyd went out for a stroll and met Mr. Applegate, a likable double-crosser who lit cigarettes by snapping his fingers. As a real estate salesman, Joe knew a thing or two about deals. As a perennial rooter for the ill-starred Washington Senators, he knew even more about baseball — and frustration. But what he didn't know, what the crafty Applegate taught him, is that when you sell your soul to win the American League pennant, there's the devil to pay.

You don't have to be a baseball fan (Joe's wife wasn't, at first) to find merriment in every minute of *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant*. And at the end — well, you may even find yourself transformed, as Joe was. When Applegate is around, anything can happen.

"...the best baseball story since Ring Lardner."
— Charles Poore in *The New York Times*

"...exciting as well as funny, ingenious and generally delightful."
—John K. Hutchens in the *New York Herald Tribune*



CHAPTER 1

ON THE HOT and humid night of July 21, 1958, when all signs pointed to the pennant for the New York Yankees — as usual — a manhole cover rose slowly from its resting place near the center of a certain intersection in Washington, D. C. A moment later the dark-clad figure of a man climbed gingerly up to the street, walked over to a street light and studied a slip of paper intently before hurrying away.

It was on the same night that Joe Boyd, a middle-aged real estate salesman, met the man who was to change the course of his life and, indirectly, the standings in the American League.

The Yankees, fresh from a triumphant series in Chicago, were in Cleveland that night, while the Washington Senators were in Detroit, engaging the Tigers in a game of little meaning except to the most grimly devoted followers of the two teams; and these, as the years passed, were becoming fewer. The Tigers were currently the fifth-place team; the Senators were in sixth and moving toward seventh, their customary habitat, with all the singleness of purpose of a homing pigeon.

Joe Boyd, one of the Senators' grimly devoted followers, was sitting alone in the dark on his screened side porch, listening with despair to a broadcast of the game. It was now the top of the seventh inning and the Tigers were leading by seven runs.

When the Senators failed to score in the seventh, Joe muttered,

"What's the matter with you guys anyway?" and, shaking his head, turned on a lamp and picked up the evening paper, already folded to the sports page.

With no pleasure, he reread an account of the Yankees' victory over the Chicago White Sox the previous day, a victory which gave the Yankees a sweep of the three-game series and moved them out ahead of the White Sox, the second-place club, by seven and a half games.

Tossing the paper aside, he gave his attention once more to the radio, for the Senators were coming up in the eighth. The first batter singled, and Joe's imagination quickly constructed a rally which would send his team in front. His reverie was snapped by the second batter, who grounded into a double play, and by Mrs. Boyd, who was calling from their bedroom:

"Isn't it over yet, Joe?"

"Okay," he said, concentrating.

"I said isn't it over yet?"

"Almost."

"Are they losing?"

Joe grunted.

"Joe, are they losing?"

"Yes, they're losing."

"That's strange," she said sarcastically, and when he didn't reply she said, "Well, I'm going to turn off my light now. Are you coming up soon?"

Joe grunted.

Bess's attitude toward his feeling for baseball ranged from tolerance to sarcasm — tolerant during the early season and steadily less sympathetic as the summer wore on and the humidity mounted. Often, most recently the day before yesterday, she told him with scorn that he, a grown man, should be ashamed to let the fortunes of a baseball team, and a feckless one at that, mean so much in his life.

"Why, if you added up the number of hours you've spent in your life watching and listening to baseball games, there's no end to the things you could have done with that time," she was fond of saying. "You could have built a bridge or read all the

greatest books. If you had *been* a baseball player it might be different."

If he had been a baseball player . . . He often thought of the time when he was a sophomore in high school. He had planned to go out for the team. But on the day practice started, a girl—whose name he had since forgotten but to whom he was deeply attached at the time—asked him to walk home from school with her. He didn't go out for the team that day . . . nor the next . . . nor ever. It was on such small hinges of fate that a man's whole career swung. But for that girl, he might have been a major-league star. He had a deft pair of hands, a good sense of coördination. . . . It was true that he had never been much at hitting a curve, but that was a deficiency that could have been overcome with practice. . . . He sighed.

The Tigers scored one in the eighth. In the ninth, now eight runs behind, Joe's team went out one, two, three. As soon as the last batter was retired, he switched off the radio, not even waiting to hear the totals.

Slumping again, he began to rock gently. A breeze rustled through the maple next door and moved on to soothe his face. There was no sound in the suburban neighborhood except, very faintly . . . He listened and was sure he heard the sound of a hose a couple of doors away. That would be old man Everett stealthily watering his lawn and his azaleas, hoping no one would hear and report him, for there had been such a dry spell that watering lawns and washing cars were prohibited until the next good rain.

Finally Joe rose, stretched, and set out from the house for the short walk he took every evening just before bed. He had turned two corners of the block and was nearing the bottom of the long hill when, with a quickening of his breath, he saw the dark-clad figure of a man step suddenly from the shadows.

"Good evening, Mr. Boyd," the man said.

"Good evening," Joe said, mystified that his name was known. He hurried on, but the man fell into step beside him, and as they neared a street lamp Joe took a sidelong glance. Although even at this hour the temperature was still over ninety, the stranger

wore a black topcoat, the lapels turned up around his chin and mouth. A black hat was pulled low over his brow.

"How did the team make out tonight?" the stranger asked.

"They lost. Eleven to three."

The stranger made a clucking noise of sympathy. "That's a shame," he said. "It must be hard for you."

Joe found the man's voice singular. Although its owner seemed to be trying very hard for an effect of mellifluous cordiality, the voice was deeply rasping, at times hoarse.

"I'm used to it by now," Joe said. "Or partly used to it, anyway."

"And incidentally, how was your vacation trip to Quebec this year?" the stranger asked.

"It wasn't bad. Say, do you live around here? I don't remember seeing you before. Where do you get your information, anyway?"

"I was reading through your file," the stranger said.

"My file!"

"Sure. We have a file on quite a few of you older fellows."

"Who is we, if you don't mind my asking?"

The stranger chuckled. "My name is Applegate, but that's of no importance. What's important right at the moment is that punk baseball team you've been rooting for all these years."

"I wouldn't call them punk exactly," Joe said, and a coolness came into his voice.

"You wouldn't? Let me ask you how long it's been since they won the pennant."

"Well, let's see . . ."

"It's fast approaching three decades," the stranger said. "Am I right? Now if the file is accurate, and —"

"I don't get this file stuff," Joe broke in. "What kind of a file? I'm no Communist."

The stranger laughed without control, finally saying weakly, "No, of course you're not a Communist."

"Well, then what are you talking about?"

The stranger straightened to his full height, folded the lapels of his coat more carefully over his chin and touched his nose lightly. "Mr Boyd," he said, "I've got a proposition for you. How would you like to be a baseball player?"

"A baseball player? Where? In the old men's softball league?"

"In the American League, Mr. Boyd. Playing for that team of yours. You can be Moses and lead them out of the wilderness, to use a metaphor I've never particularly cared for."

"That must have been a good party you went on tonight," said Joe.

"Don't make light, Mr. Boyd," the stranger said sternly. "My time isn't so plentiful that I can spend it in levity."

"You mean I should take you seriously?" Joe asked.

"Very seriously."

"How's all this going to happen?"

"It's easy," the stranger said. "Just say the word and you can be the finest baseball player in the world."

"But how? I'm fifty years old. This is ridiculous."

"Age is a very flexible thing," the stranger said. "You don't have to be fifty years old, you know. What's most important is the will to be a good baseball player. And, Mr. Boyd, in all this country we've never found anybody with as great a will as yours."

"Mr. Applegate," Joe said, starting off, "I suggest you see a doctor. Or at least go sleep it off."

Joe heard the low chuckle following him up the block. Then it seemed to overtake him and a moment later his heart pounded violently. Just ahead, a dark figure stepped from the shadows.

"Now as I was saying, Mr. Boyd," the stranger began, and then chuckled again. "I'm sorry I startled you, my friend," he went on. "I have nothing but friendly intentions. My only wish is to help you lead a more fruitful life. Now if you'll just stand still a second or two so I can make myself clear . . . Cigarette?"



Joe declined and a second later felt his body grow weak. The stranger had lit his own cigarette but not by match or lighter. He had merely snapped his fingers.

"Now then," he said, "suppose we find a place to sit down and talk this over."

Joe looked around and saw a bench next to the bus-stop sign at the corner, although to his certain knowledge there had never been a bench there before.

"By the way," the stranger said, settling himself and stretching his legs, "do you mind if I call you Joe? And you can call me App, if you like. That's what my friends call me. . . . Come on, Joe, have a seat."

Joe stood a moment longer and then sat down gingerly, as far away from Applegate as the width of the bench permitted.

"Now," Applegate said, "let's get down to business. How long has it been since you ran?"

"Ran?"

"Sure, ran."

"I don't know. I can't remember exactly."

"Will you do me a favor, Joe? Stand up. Now walk a few steps away. That's right. Now head back down the block. Good! Now — run!"

"I don't feel like running," Joe said.

"Well, just jog a little. Just get yourself started."

Joe began to jog, and then, suddenly, as though beyond his own will, he was running at great speed. His body felt light and thin and wiry. In midflight he thumped his stomach. It was flat as a board, and as hard. It was not his own stomach, he thought headily, but all the better. Breathing easily, his head reared back, he tasted something from the distant past: the way warm spring air had once felt, rushing past his head; the sense of headlong flight, a feeling he had not experienced since his youth.

At the end of the block he stopped, and when he touched his stomach it was again his own. Flabby.

"Now run back," Applegate called.

Joe began running, but sluggishly, with heavy legs. After only a few steps he was breathing hard. His temples pounded. His stomach quivered out ahead of him. He clenched his fists and dug harder, but he could not recapture the swiftness of the trip down and already he missed it.

"Out of condition, Joe?" Applegate asked sympathetically, as Joe finally arrived. "How did it feel on the way down, though?"


ROCERIES

Gasping, Joe sank to the bench, fearful of the strain on his heart. "It felt good," he managed to say.

"You'd be able to run like that all the time," Applegate said. "Yes, and more besides. To have your youth, to have almost unheard-of skill in baseball — to be able to carry that team of yours on your back — all the way to the pennant. The question is, would you like it?"

Joe stood up, trying to suck in deep breaths. "You mean you're trying to tell me they could still win the pennant this season?"

"Sure, it's not too late. A couple of good winning streaks for you boys and a little tough luck for the Yankees — that's all it would take."

"That's ridiculous," Joe said between pantings.

"It's not ridiculous, boy. Just trust in me."

A bus was approaching. It stopped and a woman got off.

"Oh, good evening, Mr. Boyd," she said.

"Good evening, Mrs. Stewart."

"What are you doing standing here on the corner all by yourself?" she asked.

It was not until then that Joe saw Applegate was gone.

"Oh, just getting a little air," he said.

The woman started off, her heels clicking out of hearing.

"Hey," Joe called. "Where are you, Applegate? Hey, *Applegate*."

There was no answer, no sign. Joe looked about in each direction, peering into the shadows, and, when he turned back, the bench too had disappeared.

Joe dropped to the edge of his twin bed (Bess was snoring complacently in hers) and began pulling off his socks. He paused and stared abstractedly into a shaft of moonlight. Of course it had happened. Beyond the shadow of a doubt it had happened. Not only that, but he knew who Applegate was and what he was offering and the usual strings attached. And the time had already come, Joe told himself, to stop being coy and decide what he was going to do about it.

He continued to undress. The fantastic thing wasn't that Apple-

gate should have asked *some*body; the fantastic thing was that it should have been Joe Boyd. Why Joe Boyd? Unless, as Applegate had intimated, it was his love of baseball. It was comforting, at any rate, to know that it wasn't because he had established a reputation for evil.

Perhaps it was his duty to respond: his duty to all the long-suffering legions who, like himself, yearned for the Yankees' downfall; and to the scanter legions who yearned for the renascence of the Senators. It was a worthy cause. That much was established. And he must admit that his feelings were not entirely altruistic. There would be glory in it for himself.

He walked into the bathroom. It would be like a crusade. And a crusade, by its very nature, meant glory as well as sacrifice. With pajama jacket off, he stood before the bathroom mirror, appraising his body closely for the first time in years, sharply aware of its spent tissue, its grizzled appearance.

A baseball player . . . He stared into the mirror's reflection of his rather meek eyes and tried to bring into them a glint of determination. But, a voice warned, it could mean jeopardizing your whole future.

Well, he concluded, walking back to his room and getting into bed, it would depend on what kind of deal he could make with this Applegate. He mustn't appear too eager. And, as he always told himself when approaching a real estate deal, you are not to be disappointed no matter which way it turns out.

Just before the clock struck two, he was wakened by a sharp, unmistakable pang of hunger. He padded barefoot downstairs and through the silent rooms to the kitchen.

"Hiya, Joe."

He had opened the door of the refrigerator and grasped a quart of milk when the voice rasped behind him. He jumped, turned, and there, dimly outlined in the light from beneath the ice-cube compartment, was Applegate, seated at the kitchen table.

Unsteadily, Joe put the milk bottle on the table. "How did you get in?" he asked. "The doors were locked."

"Oh, well," Applegate said airily. "You know how it is. . . . Say, how about pouring me a little of that? Thanks. Incidentally,

I'm sorry I had to run out on you but I had an emergency call."

Unsettled in spite of himself, Joe sat down at the table across from Applegate and for a few seconds both sipped their milk in silence.

Finishing his at last, Applegate expelled his breath in a sigh of deep satisfaction and said, "So as I believe I was saying, how about it?"

"You mean about the baseball?" Joe said.

"Of course."

"Well, I don't know. I won't say I'm disinterested exactly, but — there are so many angles to be considered."

"Like what?"

"Well, for instance, what would happen to me, Joe Boyd?"

"Why, you'd be with the team, of course."

"I mean this me. So far as my wife and my job are concerned, I'd just disappear? Is that it?"

"Well, yes," Applegate said.

"Forever?"

"Well, that's one way of putting it, yes."

"And what happens after I stop being a baseball player? Then where would I be?"

"Well, now, of course, that's fairly well known," Applegate said. "Let's not belabor it, shall we?"

"You mean I'd be in it forever?"

"You might express it that way, yes."

"Well, on general principles I've always been against anything drawn up in perpetuity," Joe said. "That's one thing. Then there's my wife. I've got her to consider. Now if you should give me something with an escape clause, I might consider it."

"Escape clause," Applegate muttered. "Escape clause, my foot!"

"Okay."

"Hey, where you going?"

"To bed," Joe said, turning back to put the milk glasses in the sink. "If we're not going to have a meeting of minds I might as well get some sleep."

Applegate gave a rueful chuckle. "Boy, I'd hate to be a real estate man trying to sell you something. Okay, come and sit down

again. I guess half a loaf is better than none. What's your deal?"

"Something on a temporary basis," Joe said. "The principal thing is this. If I don't like it, I'm entitled to call the whole thing off. On that basis I think I might be willing to have a whack at it."

Applegate leaped to his feet. "Good boy, Joe! Splendid." His voice was not the voice of one who had just been bested in a bargain, and Joe suddenly felt deep misgivings.

"Suppose we get the ball rolling right away," Applegate said. "Let's just enter into a gentleman's agreement tonight, and then in a few days we can iron out the details. Okay? Because I think it's important that you get to the team as soon as possible. Just give me your hand and we'll shake on it. No, the other hand."

Applegate's palm was moist and his handshake of the limp-fish variety, but Joe was not to think of these things until later.

"You mean that's all there is to it?" he said.

"Sure. What did you expect to do — sign your name in blood, or some phony stunt like that? This is the twentieth century, man."

"Okay, if you say so. I'll have to write my wife a note."

"All right. Tell her you heard gold has been discovered in Kentucky." Applegate laughed. "That's really not so funny, though, come to think of it. Okay now. I'm going out after a cab and make your plane reservation. I'll be back in ten minutes."

With pounding heart, Joe climbed the stairs silently. In the bathroom he began the note:

> Dear Bess: When you wake up, I will be gone. I can't tell you where, so please trust me. Don't get the police. Don't be nervous. It won't be for too long, and when I come back we'll be rich, probably. Please call the office and tell them I'm taking a leave of absence to go see my sick brother in Minnesota unexpectedly. I will send all the money you need. Don't forget the taxes are due on the house next week. This has nothing to do with any other woman. You know I wouldn't want anybody but my old girl. Love, Joe.

He felt tears begin as he wrote the last sentence. Then he carried the note into their room and put it on the bureau.

The taxi was waiting a few houses down. Walking toward it,

he was struck again by fear and halted in his tracks, looking back at the dark house.

"Come on, Joe," Applegate whispered hoarsely. "The meter's running up."

With a final look, Joe turned and walked slowly to the cab.

"I have your reservation on the four-forty-five plane," Applegate said as he got in. "You'll be in Detroit in time for breakfast and then — look out, Tigers!"

"You made good time," Joe said.

"Sure," Applegate said. "I have friends."

CHAPTER 2

"BRIGGS STADIUM," Joe said as he got into a taxi in Detroit that afternoon. They had shopped for new clothes and baseball equipment until one o'clock and then lunched at the hotel. It was now about three.

"Just get in the cab and relax," had been Applegate's final instruction. "By the time you get to the ball park you'll be the new guy."

The new guy, they agreed, should have a different name, and their choice had been Joe Hardy because, as Applegate pointed out, it sounded rather athletic.

But it was still Joe Boyd who sat in the taxi. This was evident from the mirror which Joe, sitting on the edge of the seat, watched intently. The blocks were passing rapidly and he asked, "How much farther now?"

"Just a few blocks more," the driver said.

Joe's brow furrowed. "Okay, Applegate, okay, how about it?" he muttered, thinking again that a taxi was a ridiculous place to pick for the transformation, if indeed there was to be a transformation.

The cab cut over to the curb lane and pulled to a stop. The mirror still showed the face of Joe Boyd, and it was with irritation that Joe reached into his pocket for a bill.

It must have happened when he switched his glance to count the change the driver was dropping into his palm, for with the

dropping of the last dime he saw a concerned expression pass over the driver's face.

He looked quickly at the mirror and then, grinning, got out and slammed the door. "Good luck, driver," he said in a vibrating voice and headed for the ball-park entrance, carrying in his mind's eye the image of a young face, of close-cropped hair, blond as his had been blond in youth, of a face grown ruddy and of eyes clear and snapping.

He asked the way to the visiting team's dressing room and was directed along a concrete runway beneath the grandstand. The teams were meeting in a double-header, starting at six o'clock.

The door to the dressing room was locked and, dropping his equipment bag, he waited. At four o'clock some of the players began to arrive, and in another few minutes Joe recognized Mr. Benny van Buren, the Washington team's manager, hurrying along the runway, wearing a harassed look.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. van Buren, my name is Joe Hardy," Joe said, holding out his hand, which, after a second's hesitation, Mr. van Buren shook without enthusiasm.

"What can I do for you, son?" he said.

"I'd like a tryout," Joe said. "I've got all my stuff right here."

Mr. van Buren looked from valise to Joe with eyes crinkled at the corners from many long nights of squinting at pop flies against light towers. They were the eyes of a man who has known great suffering, and Joe felt a wave of sympathy. In his playing days, Mr. van Buren had been the best third baseman the team had ever had. Managing a seventh-place team these five years must have been gall.

"If I could hit a couple while the team's taking batting practice—" Joe went on as Mr. van Buren hesitated. "That's all the time I'd need."

"Where've you been playing, fella?" Mr. van Buren asked.

"Well, to be honest, it was mostly sand-lot ball, but I can hit a ball quite a distance, I think."

"You think?"

"Well, I'm pretty sure."



At this point a swarthy individual with a dour expression approached.

"Hiya, Rocky, how's the wing?" Mr. van Buren asked.

The newcomer shook his head ruefully. "Wing's okay, Ben," he said, "but I don't think I'd better pitch tonight. It was so hot I didn't feel like going out, so I sat up in the hotel room watching TV most of the day, and it gave me a buster of a headache."

Mr. van Buren frowned disdainfully, and Joe felt his own brow crease in sympathy with the manager. This must be Rocky Pratt, the guy everybody said had so much potential but who never delivered. With an attitude like this it was small wonder.

"Okay," Mr. van Buren said curtly, "suppose you pitch batting practice. Maybe it'll help your head." He turned to Joe. "Okay, kid, there's your man. Go out and let's see what you can do."

Joe dressed uneasily, his back to the room, worried for a while that Applegate, with his already apparent fondness for bum jokes, might pull a switch on him, and he would be exposed before this group of stalwarts as a fifty-year-old real estate salesman.

He listened, with growing surprise and disappointment, to the conversation going on about the room. He had always assumed that the men of a seventh-place team would be cast down in gloom. But around him there were only relatively happy sounds. A couple of guys were discussing TV programs and two others their children. Somebody told a joke.

Joe shook his head, puzzled. The thrill would be less in bailing out a team bland in defeat. And then he remembered Mr. van Buren and felt better. Mr. van Buren was a man who cared.

IT WAS a glaringly hot afternoon, or should have been, Joe thought, as he walked out onto the field; and then he halted in his tracks, a smile spreading slowly over his face. He realized that, since the second he stepped from the taxi, he had felt neither heat nor humidity. Applegate was a man of many facets.

Still smiling, he looked around the park. A couple of guys were in the outfield shagging flies and a few others were fooling around the infield. Rocky Pratt was already on the hill, loosening up and pausing now and then to press the heel of his hand to his temple and shake his head vigorously.

Joe walked over to the dugout, picked up a bat and headed for the plate. The batting cage had been wheeled up and Pratt was firing them in hard. Joe watched, suddenly uneasy. Applegate now was far away, and although this might be a young man's body it was still Joe Boyd inside.

The ball came toward the plate like a bullet and hit the catcher's mitt with the report of a cannon.

Affecting nonchalance, Joe gripped the bat and took a couple of practice swings. He was surprised at the coördination in his muscles and at the way his stomach stretched tight as he pivoted.

"Okay," Pratt said.

Many hours before, Joe had decided that he would swing left-handed, and it was as a left-handed batter that he stepped now to the plate.

Pratt's first pitch zipped in under Joe's wrists, and he stood with rooted spikes, not offering. Again the ball came in and once more Joe stood frozen. The catcher made a sound of impatience.

"There's nothing to it," Applegate had said. "All you gotta do is swing. I'll take care of the rest."

On the next pitch he swung. The ball soared on a line into deepest center field.

"Nice poke, kid," the catcher muttered.

"But after you get the feel of one or two, you're on your own," Applegate had said.

The next one Joe hit into the same spot.

"Nice poke again, boy."

Something was bubbling up inside Joe, making him want to laugh, but he set his jaw, dug in his spikes.

"See what you can do with this one," Pratt called. He delivered, and then turned to watch the ball sail into deep right center.

"Hey," Joe heard a voice shouting, "somebody better go in and get Benny out here. Hold it a minute, Rocky."

Pratt stood on the mound, bouncing the ball in his glove. Joe waggled the bat, unwilling even to disturb the position of his feet for fear of breaking the spell.

Mr. van Buren appeared and called, "Bear down this time, Rocky."

Other activity ceased. Other players hurried from the dressing room and, while everyone watched, Joe Hardy swung four times more; three were modest-length home runs, and the fourth went clear over the upper right-field stands, quite a poke in Detroit.

At this point, Mr. van Buren called a halt. "Okay, kid," he said in a restrained voice; but his grip on Joe's biceps as he steered him toward the dugout was anything but calm. At the same time he started shouting, "Kent! Where's Kent? . . . Well, go find him, quick!"

Kent Kenyon, Joe learned in a few minutes, was the club's

road secretary, the only official traveling with the team who was authorized to sign new players to a contract.

CHAPTER 3

THE NEXT MORNING Joe bought a Washington paper. It was the same paper which Bess, perhaps even at this moment, was spreading beside her plate at breakfast.

He opened it immediately to the sports page, and read:

> Detroit, July 22 — Two pinch-hit home runs off the bat of a 21-year-old ex-sand-lotter carried the Nats to a double win over the Tigers tonight, for their first twin victory of the season. The scores were 6 to 3 and 5 to 4.
>
> Young Joe Hardy, signed to a Washington contract less than an hour before the curtain raiser of the twi-night affair, produced the Frank Merriwell pokes each time in the ninth inning, driving across four runs in all.
>
> Young Hardy, about whom little is known save that he never before had played organized ball, was sent up to the plate in the first game with the score tied 3 and 3 in the ninth and two men on base. The count was 2 and 0 when he hit the next pitch into the stands to give his mates the ball game.
>
> In the nightcap the score was again tied, this time at four apiece, when Joe was called from the dugout to swing for Bill Gregson. He responded with another home run in almost the same spot as the first.
>
> The double win halted, at least temporarily, the Nats' nose dive and moved them to within three games of the fifth-place Tigers.
>
> Manager Benny van Buren, highly elated over young Hardy's feats, said the young man would be in the starting line-up for tomorrow's finale with the Tigers, after which the team moves on to Chicago. Oddly enough, young Hardy says he's not particular about what position he plays. Van Buren said he has right field in mind for the redoubtable neophyte.

Folding the paper, Joe went in to breakfast. Something was missing. It was like being on a television program in a strange

city, with no friends to watch. He was the star performer, but he was performing in a void, with nobody from his past life to applaud, unless it was a man named Applegate.

CERTAINLY, in the matter of applause, no one could have been more steadfast than Applegate. From a box seat along the right-field line he applauded hoarsely all through that afternoon as Joe led the team to a 12-to-7 victory over the Tigers in the series finale. And when the team moved to Chicago he was in his accustomed spot for all three games. Three in a row Joe and his mates won from the White Sox, giving them a winning streak of six games and moving them to within a game of collaring the fifth-place Tigers.

On the last day of the series, a little after nine in the evening, Joe was lying on the bed in his hotel room, replaying in retrospect that afternoon's game, when there was a light tap at the door.

Joe got up and opened the door. "Well, Mr. Applegate . . ." he said.

"Why don't you cut out that Mr. Applegate stuff?" his visitor asked. "Why don't you call me App? How's it going?"

"Fine so far," Joe said.

"I just dropped by to see if there was anything I could do," Applegate said. "Anything you need?"

"No," Joe said. "I can't think of a thing."

"All packed, I see," Applegate said, indicating a piece of bright-yellow luggage, his own selection, standing near the door.

"Yep. We leave at ten thirty."

"I hear the fans are going to turn out and meet you at the train when you get back to Washington." Applegate smiled. Sitting on the bed, he removed his hat. "You're almost a national figure already. Doesn't it make you happy?"

"I will admit it's a great kick to see those balls go sailing into the stands."

"Sure it's a kick, lad," Applegate said. He lay back on the bed, hands clasped behind his neck. "And think of the pleasure you're giving poor old Benny van Buren. He's a new man. He's not

admitting it just yet, but he's even started thinking about the pennant. And think of the pleasure you're giving Old Man Welch." Applegate chuckled. "What a character *he* is. Ever meet him? You know, the club owner?"

"No, I've never met him, but I've heard a lot about him."

Applegate laughed again. "He's marvelous. I think they're planning a press conference when you get back. They're going to have you sign another contract for the photographers. What did they give you on that first contract?"

"Five thousand."

"Make 'em give you ten. And incidentally, speaking of contracts . . . as long as we've got a few minutes . . . you remember we were going to talk about terms. This seems as good a time as any. Okay?"

Joe shrugged. "I guess so."

"Do you mind if I turn out the lights?" Applegate asked, doing so. "When I'm conducting official business I don't like a great deal of light. Now, the first thing I want to ask you is this. You aren't still insisting on that ridiculous escape clause you were talking about, are you?"

"I sure am."

Applegate sighed. "I knew you wouldn't give in, lad, but there's no harm in trying. Now then . . ."

He cleared his throat. Joe noticed that his voice seemed more high-pitched than usual and unnecessarily excited.

"What I've got in mind is a contract that says something like this: You stick with me until September twenty-first. You started July twenty-first, so that would make it an even two months. Then on September twenty-first you make your decision. If you decide you don't like it, then I'll switch you back. Fair enough?"

"That's not exactly what I had in mind," Joe said. "Suppose I want to switch back before September twenty-first?"

"Come, Joe, you wanted an escape clause and you got it. And whether you know it or not, that's quite a concession on my part."

"Where's the contract?"

There was a rustling noise, and when Applegate turned on the lamp he held a piece of foolscap.

"Here we go," he said, spreading it on the desk. And then he did something he had done once before, when they had had lunch in Detroit — put out his cigarette by squeezing the lighted end between thumb and forefinger.

Joe bent over the foolscap and read carefully. "You sure there's no invisible ink anywhere?"

"I don't like to hear you say things like that, Joe," Applegate said in a hurt voice.



"Okay. Now wait a minute. This says that on September twenty-first I have the privilege of switching back, but not after the twenty-first. That means that if I want to switch back on October first, for instance, I won't be able to, is that right?"

"Of course, Joe. That's what we've been saying all along."

Joe silently read further and then said, "Okay. You got a pen?"

"Sure." Applegate produced a ball point and Joe signed, then dropped into a chair. "I'm afraid this is a bad investment for

you, App. There's no chance in the world that I'll stick on after the twenty-first."

"Well . . ." Applegate lit another cigarette and tried to conceal what certainly looked like a smirk.

Looking at his watch, he said, "I guess you don't have much time left now, and before you go to the station there's a girl I want you to meet — she's enough to knock your eyeballs back against your cerebellum."

"A girl? Listen, you know I'm married."

"So who said you weren't? You don't have to take advantage of this if you don't want to, but . . . as far as that goes . . . what nobody don't know won't hurt 'em. Come on, it's almost time for you to leave."

She was sitting in the lobby near the cigar stand, and as Joe and Applegate approached she glanced up from a newspaper, uncrossed her knees and smiled.

"Joe, this is Lola," Applegate said.

"Hello, Lola."

"How do you do, Mr. Hardy?" She held out her hand.

"Lola is the most beautiful girl in the world," Applegate said, not with the rising inflection that might be expected in such a statement, but simply as a pronouncement of fact.

And Joe did not doubt it. His glance fell to her black linen pumps and her slim ankles, then reached again for her eyes. He had an impression of lavender. She wore a black dress, off both tanned shoulders, and her hair was as black as her dress.

"You'll be seeing a lot of Lola," Applegate said. "Excuse me, I want to get a cigar."

"I've just been reading about you, Mr. Hardy," the girl said, recrossing her legs. "You must be a superlative ballplayer." Her voice was soft and cultured.

"It's a lot of fun," he said uneasily.

"I would simply adore to watch you sometime," Lola said. "What city is it you go to now?"

"Washington," Joe said.

Across the lobby he saw some of the team heading for the street. "I'm afraid I'll have to leave now," he said awkwardly.

"Well, it was so nice meeting you, Mr. Hardy." The girl again held out her hand. Her arm was slim, her shoulder sleek. "Perhaps I shall be seeing you in Washington sometime, yes?"

"That would be fine," Joe said. "Well, good-bye."

CHAPTER 4

"Now let me get this straight, Joe," one of the reporters said. "If you've never played organized ball before, where did you learn to hit like that?"

"Well," he replied carefully, modestly, "it just came naturally to me, I guess."

The news conference was being held in the ball-park office. Joe stood against a round walnut table, and seated around it were Mr. Adam Welch, the club's nonagenarian owner; a smiling Mr. van Buren; and other club officials.

"Now wait a minute, Joe. You're not telling us that out in Detroit was the first time you ever swung a bat?" a second reporter demanded. There were about twelve in all, including four from New York papers, in town for the three-game series with the Yankees which would begin the following night.

"Oh, no," Joe said. "I've played quite a bit of sand-lot ball."

"Sand-lot ball!" one of the reporters bellowed. "You mean you came straight off the sand lots and hit the ball over the right-field stands in Detroit? And averaged almost two homers a game ever since?"

"Yes, that's right," Joe said. He looked at his feet, feeling something very much like guilt. He had never been good at lying. Looking up again, he saw a familiar figure enter the room and casually take a stand at the outer fringe of reporters. Catching Joe's eye, Applegate winked and held up his thumb and forefinger in a circle. Involuntarily, Joe found his presence comforting.

"Well, we'll let that one pass, Joe," the reporter said. "Now tell us something about yourself. Are you married?"

Joe hesitated, then saw Applegate shake his head vigorously.

"No," he said.

"Where you from, Joe?"

"My home town is in Missouri."

"What town is that?"

Joe hesitated. "Hannibal," he said.

"You mean where Mark Twain came from?"

"That's right."

All the reporters scribbled industriously at this point, and one of them said, "Tom Sawyer makes good in the big leagues."

"Tell us your favorite food, Mr. Hardy," a voice boomed. It was Applegate, who himself now had a pencil in hand and was writing on the back of an envelope.

"Steak, I guess," Joe said. All except Applegate let this pass without making a note of it.

"Say, listen, Benny, I wonder if we could get that picture of Joe signing now," one of the photographers said. "How about Joe in the middle, signing the new contract, and Mr. Welch, you on one side and be tearing up the old one, and Benny, you on the other side and just kind of looking happy, or something."

Mr. van Buren smiled. "I *am* happy," he said.

Mr. Welch walked around to the spot assigned, his slight figure held very erect in the three-button banker's-gray suit.

Joe picked up a fountain pen, his eye drawn by the figures $10,000 on the third line. "I appreciate this, Mr. Welch," he said, feeling a strong fondness for the old man, and it was a fondness that had nothing to do with the ten thousand dollars. Even though Joe knew him only from newspaper references, he had for years admired him for his spirit, his hope, his hatred of the Yankees.

"Glad to do it, boy," the old man said. His eyes were watery blue, but very alert and excited now, as he held the old contract aloft. Flash bulbs blinked as he tore it down the middle, and as Joe signed the new one.

With the photographers gone, one of the reporters asked, "Now, Mr. Hardy, before we break it up, there's just one question I'd like to ask. How is it that you decided to latch onto a team like the Senators?"

"Why not?" Joe asked, nettled.

"Why didn't you try to hook up with the Yankee system, or one of the good National League clubs instead?"

"I wouldn't call that exactly a tactful question," Joe said. In the back of the room, he saw Applegate smile fleetingly, then leave.

"Perhaps not tactful but pertinent," the reporter said.

Mr. Welch's eyes were blinking excitedly and his carefully trimmed white goatee quivered. "What's your name, young fellow?" he asked the reporter.

"Head. Luster Head of the New York *Bugle,*" the offender answered coolly.

From the corner of his eye, Joe saw Mr. van Buren making frantic gesticulations. One of the local reporters, picking up the cue, asked in a soothing voice, "Mr. Welch, with Joe Hardy on the club, you'll probably win the pennant in a breeze, right?"

"I should think so," the old man said, mollified, and sank back into his chair again, but he was immediately up as the reporter named Head sniffed and said, "You mean you think you're going to beat the Yankees?"

"Beat the Yankees!" Mr. Welch was shaking a gnarled forefinger at Head. "You can bet your sweet life we'll beat the Yankees. What makes you think we won't, young man?"

"Now take it easy, Mr. Welch," Mr. van Buren said. "Don't get excited."

Head smiled tolerantly. "Okay, Mr. Welch, you're going to beat the Yankees. You're going to win the pennant by twenty-nine games. I'm sorry."

Joe felt an urge to rush Head and swing, but restrained it. It was more than likely that Applegate was responsible for this . . . that knowing smile as he left. It was probably pure malice.

"Don't get sarcastic, young fellow," Mr. Welch said, weaving behind the table.

"Well, twenty-eight games then," Head said.

"Why, you listen to me," Mr. Welch said, enraged. "If it wasn't for just blind devil's luck those Yankees would have dropped clear out of the League by now. They'd be down — "

"All right, fellows, I guess we'd better break it up now," Mr. van Buren said. "And next time we'll just skip any questions about the Yankees, okay?"

The reporters headed for the door and then stopped, arrested by the sound of a weak, piping voice.

"Wait a minute," Mr. Welch said. "I've got something I want to say."

Joe turned and was touched at the transformation. Mr. Welch's shoulders had sagged. His face was not the happy, excited face it had been early in the news conference; nor was it angry, as it had been a few minutes before. It was now the humble face of a very old man.

"I know you fellows think I'm a crazy old fool," he went on, "but when you get to be an old man, sometimes you can't help it. Especially when there's something inside that makes you keep on hoping. So that's . . ."

He broke off and sat down, bending his head low over folded hands. There was a hush in the room, broken finally by Head, who said softly, "Sorry, Ben," and headed for the door.

The others followed, but one of them turned and asked in a subdued voice, "Incidentally, Ben, are you still going to let Roscoe Ent pitch against the Athletics this week-end?"

"No," Mr. van Buren said. "Of course not." He paused and his jaw set. "You can put this down if you like, boys. We've got our eyes on that pennant. We're not thinking in terms of being three or four or six or eight games out of the first division. We're thinking in terms of how many games we're out of first place. Right, Mr. Welch?"

The old man was being led from the room. Smiling sadly, he nodded. "Right, Benny," he said.

#

LEAVING the office a few minutes later, Joe noticed a figure dart around the corner of the building. After a short distance, he looked back and saw a man no taller than Mr. Welch but many years younger, angrily glaring after him. Joe turned and walked on, puzzled until it came to him that the man must, of course, have been Roscoe Ent. And although he hadn't thought about it before, Roscoe Ent had cause to hate Joe Hardy. He looked back again, but Ent had disappeared.

Roscoe Ent, a clown and an occasional pitcher, had been signed

on by the club as an attendance booster a number of years before, when the fans, depressed by the team's chronic seventh-place-itis, began to stay away from the park in large numbers. Sometimes in the ninth, with the team far behind, Roscoe was permitted to pitch. He could get the ball over the plate and he had a tiny curve, but most of the time he was hit hard. Beyond his occasional pitching stints, he put on a little show at every game—a few dance steps; driving a midget car around the infield and stopping to walk over on his hands and touch each base. The fans loved it and, largely because of Roscoe, attendance remained at respectable levels no matter how mediocre the caliber of the team's play.

As Joe passed by on his way out of the ball park, there were long lines of people at the ticket windows, buying tickets for tomorrow night and for the other games of the Yankee series. He had heard somebody say the advance sale was the largest in twenty years. The attraction: Joe Hardy.

Roscoe Ent, he realized, could see the handwriting on the wall. A fired-up team playing good ball would need no attendance booster, would certainly not permit a comedian to pitch. It was Joe Hardy who had fired up the team. It was Joe Hardy who might cost him his job.

And how does that make you feel, Joe asked himself. Poor Roscoe. Even though the little fellow was a symbol of the team's mediocrity, Joe had developed a liking for him during seasons past. And yet he couldn't blame himself. He had done no evil greater than help the team win, and winning, after all, was theoretically the team's ambition.

"Oh, Mr. Hardy."

Deep in thought, he hadn't heard the car approach; or at least he had been too intent to notice. But it was already at the curb outside the ball-park grounds, a green convertible, long, rakish, and of no recognizable make, and she was fluttering her hand at him.

"I was hoping I might run across you, Mr. Hardy," she said.

"Why, hello . . . hello, Lola." He walked over to the car.

"I was wondering if you would do me a favor," she said. She was gazing at him from the dark clear eyes; her lips were slightly

parted, her complexion unmarred even by the humidity. She wore a green-striped blouse of men's shirting, unbuttoned at the throat.

"I thought you were in Chicago," he said.

"I was," she said, "but now I'm here. Come on, hop in."

"What can I do for you?" he said, getting into the car.

Before answering, Lola shifted and raced off down the street. They had gone two blocks when she said, "Well, I wanted to see Mount Vernon, and I thought maybe you would be kind enough to show me the way."

"Mount Vernon?" He laughed.

"What's wrong with that?" she asked, her eyes wide in innocence. And her eyes, he had to admit, were incredible. A deep lavender, with rich dark lashes looking as soft as a cashmere sweater.

"It's just that you don't seem the type to visit Mount Vernon," he said.

"Oh, but I've been told that it is one of the most beautiful places in the country. A garden spot, really . . ."

Joe looked at her quizzically, and then with reluctant admiration, as his eyes moved to the smooth even tan of her slim arms, the gracefully shaped hands gripping the wheel.

"How long have you known Applegate?" he asked.

"Oh, a year or so."

"What do you think of him?"

"Mr. Applegate? Well, I think he's a very dynamic person. . . ."

As she drove, he studied the slender, childlike grace of her neck. She could be no more than twenty, younger even than Joe's married daughter, Ruth.

"Which way do I go, Mr. Hardy?"

"Don't tell me you're still thinking about Mount Vernon," he said. "Because if you are serious, which I doubt, I'm afraid it's too late to go there today. If you really want to go, maybe I can take you some other day."

"Would you, Joe?" Her look was grateful and something more, and the paternal feeling of a few seconds before suddenly went up in smoke. In its place he felt a deep disturbance. He tried to

remember how many years it had been since a woman had looked at him like that.

"Yes," he said. "Maybe. Listen, I guess I'd better be getting back to the hotel."

Uneasily he lit a cigarette. Something deeply significant was happening and, as nearly as he could analyze, it had something to do with a war between Joe Boyd and Joe Hardy.

"Is there any possibility that we could have dinner together?" Lola said.

"No, I'm afraid not," Joe said.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "Well, I'll be seeing you at the ball park tomorrow night, anyway. I will be out there always."

"That's very flattering," Joe said.

"Mr. Applegate says you are poetry in motion."

"Does he?" Joe said absently.

"Absolute poetry."

"Could you drop me at the hotel?" he said. "Or is it out of your way?"

"Not in the slightest," she said. "But I will drop you reluctantly."

But traffic became progressively heavier, and they were still many blocks from the hotel when it was stalled altogether. When Joe looked, the line of cars ahead seemed endless.

Lola settled back in the seat and stretched.

"Far as you can see," Joe said. "This is terrible."

"I know," she said. "Look at the poor things."

Drivers with faces tired from the long day's humidity were looking angrily out of windows. But Joe was not looking at them now. He was looking at Lola, thinking that she was a remarkable combination of slender and buxom, and the disturbance he felt was violent.

She had noticed. Smiling slowly, she said, "Are you sure you can't have dinner with me, Joe?" And then she said, "Joe! Where are you going?"

He had already slammed the door. "I'm sorry to run out on you like this," he said, "but I really am in a hurry."

Without waiting for her to reply, he walked to the curb, deeply shaken. It's one thing to set out to redeem a baseball team, he

told himself sternly, but quite another to feel the way you were just feeling about a woman not your wife.

As he reached the sidewalk, he turned, expecting to see a smirk, or mirthful disdain, or even not to see her at all. But she was looking after him with an expression of reproach, of genuine hurt. He waved, but she did not wave back and now her face changed. She seemed to be looking beyond him, finding something that brought her great sadness.

CHAPTER 5

IT WAS three quarters of an hour before game time and the stands were already almost full, for this was the night that Joe Hardy would meet the peerless Yankees head on.

He had finished batting practice and was heading for the water cooler when he chanced to look toward right field and there saw Roscoe Ent. Dressed in his uniform, the little man was doing a few dance steps near the foul line. From the fans in the vicinity there came only a smattering of laughter and, as Joe watched, Ent broke off abruptly and took a seat on the railing in front of the right-field boxes.

Struck by sympathy, Joe by-passed the dugout and headed for right field, a long ripple of applause preceding him. Doffing his cap in acknowledgment to the fans, and waving to Applegate and Lola, who had been in their box since seven thirty, Joe walked up to Ent and said, "I don't believe I've met you. My name is Hardy."

He was regarded without enthusiasm. "Yeah, I know," was the sour reply. Making no attempt to conceal his distaste for Joe's proximity, he slid two or three feet away along the railing. Then he glared up into the stands where a fan with a loud voice had just shouted something about a bus.

"How's it going?" Joe asked.

"What do *you* think, buster?" Ent said.

"It's end of the line for you, Ent," the fan yelled. "You might as well go buy your bus ticket."

Applegate, Joe could see, was smiling appreciatively at the

byplay between Ent and the raucous fan, looking expectantly from one to the other and waving a half-eaten frankfurter and roll.

"It won't be long now, Ent," the fan shouted.

Tight-lipped, the little man did not turn this time but sat staring off in the direction of the left-field bleachers.

"Back to Pocomoke for you, Ent," the fan bellowed.

Joe winced. When the Applegates scurry about disturbing the status quo, it is the Roscoe Ents of the world who suffer. The fans who scoffed tonight were the same fans who had applauded during the team's last home stand. Wanting to speak a word of comfort, Joe could find nothing to say.

Ent glared again into the stands, then rose and began walking slowly across the foul line in the direction of the center-field bull pen.

"See you later, Roscoe," Joe said.

Ent merely made a shooing motion in Joe's direction with his gloved hand and continued slowly and dejectedly toward the bull pen. Joe sighed and scuffed the grass.

IT HAS BEEN WRITTEN that when the Yankees took the field in that era, they must have appeared seven feet tall to the opposing team.

Joe retraced his steps from right field and paused near the coach's box to watch them at infield practice. Forgetting Ent for the moment, he felt a pulse of anticipation and thought again of all the years he had regarded these gray-uniformed robots as objects of hate. Yet now they looked quite ordinary: highly adept and graceful as they whipped the ball about the infield, true, but still no more than human.

The Yankee first baseman turned his head as Joe passed by. "Hiya, Joe," he said pleasantly. "You gonna hit a couple tonight?"

In character as always; meticulous, as always, never to patronize or belittle the opposing team. It was subtle and insidious. It could be lulling. They courted you with good fellowship and then beat your brains out.

Not answering, Joe waved to Mr. Welch, who had his habitual seat next to the team's dugout. His eyes were excited above the

lapels of his gabardine topcoat, upturned to keep the night air from his throat and chest. "Put it on 'em, Joe, boy," the old man shouted, and his voice and manner now were anything but resigned. "Put it on 'em."

Joe stood for a moment, still watching, on the dugout steps. Then he heard Mr. van Buren say, "All right, team, everybody down."

In the dressing room, the manager stood with his back against the bulletin board. "Everybody here?" he asked. "Okay." Whereupon he took a newspaper clipping from his hip pocket and held it up. "This is a column called 'Heading In' by a guy named Head who writes for the New York *Bugle,*" he said. "This is what he wrote this morning. I'll read just these two sentences."

Clearing his throat, he looked about the room and read: " 'They'd have you believe down here in Washington that the ball club has a new spirit. Interesting if true, but our own hunch is that, regrettably for both themselves and the rest of the league, they're still the same old slipshod, never-say-win Senators.' "

There was a deep electric silence, broken quickly by imprecations, by name calling, threats and resolutions; then the clatter of many spiked shoes moving across the concrete floor, heading toward the steps of the dugout, to the field, to battle with the Yankees, vaunted pride of Luster Head and others.

WILLIE TODD, the wily southpaw, was pitching for the Yankees that night and Willie was on. His placid, moonlike face never changing expression, he bent his assortment of slow curves and sliders over the corners with such precision that the Senators seldom got solid wood on the ball. His first two trips to the plate, even Joe was stopped. One ball he hit on a screeching line toward right center, but it was snared by the Yankee center fielder on an incredible stab; another he hit in a high arc to the base of the left-center bleacher wall, but the Yankee left infielder, playing deep and shading toward right, had plenty of time to get there.

But if Willie Todd was on that night, so too was Sammy Ransom, the Senators' rawboned fireballer, and when Joe Hardy came up for his third trip with two out in the seventh inning the score was knotted at 0–0. With the pleas of forty thousand

fans ringing through the big park, Joe went to a 3-and-1 count and then lashed a soaring liner toward right field. It spelled home run the second it left his bat, and as the ball disappeared behind the wall the sound that rang out was deafening. Slowly Joe completed the circuit, taking outstretched hands as he crossed the plate, doffing his cap as he walked to the dugout.

In the eighth the Yankees went down in order, but in the ninth the gallant Ransom faltered. Obviously tired, and with the hop gone from his fast ball, Sammy walked the first batter. The second hit into a fast double play, but Sammy, reprieved and with the game now in his hip pocket, walked the next man on four pitches. That brought up Will Talliaferro, the Yankees' hard-hitting second sacker.

The stands were silent as Sammy reared back and fogged in the first one for a strike. From his position in right field, Joe groaned. Sammy was trying to burn it past the batter when his steam was gone. Work on him, Joe silently cautioned the beleaguered pitcher. Fool him. Don't throw him fast balls.

Bent from the waist, hands on knees, Joe waited. Sammy threw, and Joe saw the umpire's right hand go up even before the sound of "Strike two" reached his ears. He stood again, easing the tension.



The Yankee runner led warily off first base. The stands grew hushed, and Joe again bent forward, hands on his knees.

Crack!

He saw the ball only as a streak of white, rising above the first baseman's head; saw the gray uniform of the base runner blurring toward second,

and then he had turned his back and was racing for the right-field stands. Only from the corner of his right eye did he see the ball reaching the spot before he reached the spot — or not quite before, because Joe had thrown up his gloved hand and taken the ball just as it was dropping over the barrier.

And then, carrying the ball, he was jogging toward the infield; and the fans, shocked at first into silence, were on their feet, shouting the name of Joe Hardy.

WHILE the opener of the Yankee series had been hard fought, in the two games that followed the Senators clobbered the champions with relative ease, winning 10 to 4 and 14 to 8. In the second game, Joe contributed two home runs, and in the third game another, this last a titanic clout over the wall in dead center, a feat accomplished previously only by the Messrs. Ruth, Gehrig and Larry Doby.

Triumphantly, the team then journeyed to New York to meet the same Yankees in a two-game series which began a swing around the East. Again they took the measure of the by then very edgy champions, and these were consecutive victories ten and eleven in the streak that had begun the evening of Joe's arrival in Detroit.

Only an elderly clubhouse custodian, Mr. Welch and Joe Boyd remembered a time when the Senators had been so high in the race so late in the season. They were now only five games behind the White Sox, who, in the interim, had sunk to third, supplanted by the ebullient Baltimore Orioles.

Columnist after columnist began to speculate that the 1958 Washington Senators might just possibly emulate the storied Boston Braves of 1914, who, mired in last place on July fourth of that year, climbed out to the pennant. And Joe, after hitting three home runs in the first game of the Boston series, picked up the paper next morning to find one columnist suggesting that even though he never played another game he should be given a place in baseball's Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, simply on the basis of what he had already achieved.

Joe grunted, letting the paper slip to the floor. He thought of

all the grizzled veterans who had won their niches at Cooperstown only after hard labor over long years; and now he was being suggested as a fit companion for them. Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth — and Applegate. Applegate in the Hall of Fame. That's what it would amount to. And suddenly he felt unclean, and even a little frightened.

THE FINAL STOP on the eastern swing was Philadelphia, where the team swept the series, stretching its victory skein to seventeen games. But it was not of the box score that Joe was thinking when he went to bed on the night of the series opener. It was of the Athletics' veteran Bobby Schantz, who that evening had pitched perhaps the greatest game of an illustrious career, yet had lost 4 to 1.

It was a game long to be remembered by those who were witnesses. Schantz was superb. The Athletics shoved across a run in the first inning; thereafter they were impotent, but entering the ninth Schantz still had his 1–0 lead. Even more notable, he also had a no-hit game. Only three times had a Senators' base runner even reached first base.

In the ninth, while the fans sat tense and expectant, Schantz got the first two Washington batters out on pop-ups. It was then that his infield knifed him in the back. Two easy ground balls were bobbled; and Schantz, momentarily unsettled, walked the next batter. That brought up Joe Hardy again, with the bases loaded.

If ever a man faced a dilemma, that man was Bobby Schantz. To give Joe a deliberate base on balls meant forcing in a run, the loss of his shutout and a tied ball game. Pitching to him, on the other hand, could mean not only the loss of his shutout but doom also to his hopes of a no-hitter. Only after a prolonged discussion with his catcher and his manager was a decision reached, and to the credit of Schantz it was the decision of a man who placed the team's welfare above his own.

For Joe could sense from the way Bobby walked back to the resin bag that he had decided to gamble. And standing there in the batter's box, gazing out toward the diminutive left-hander,

Joe felt a wave of pity. Here was Schantz, looking baseball immortality in the eye. Here was Joe Hardy, with the power to deprive him of it. In all probability, Schantz, now in the late afternoon of a great career, would never come this close again to a no-hitter. It wouldn't hurt the Senators to lose this game. The Yanks had dropped a decision to the Red Sox that afternoon, so no ground could be lost. And Joe made a decision. He would offer only token swings. He would strike out.

On the first pitch he swung weakly and purposely late, or so he thought . . . and then watched with dismay as the ball went arching over the right-field wall. Stunned for a second, he did not move; then, with heavy heart, he began trotting around the bases, sadly noticing the slumped shoulders of Bobby Schantz; hearing the groans, tasting the melancholy of the Philadelphia fans.

This was worse than reading the column about the Hall of Fame.

What was it Applegate had said? "All you gotta do is swing. I'll do the rest."

Joe told himself, Bobby Schantz *had* pitched a no-hitter. In all *baseball* fact, he had won the ball game 1 to 0. But it would never show that way in the record book.

THE NEXT MORNING, going down to breakfast, Joe had barely stepped from the elevator when his name rang across the lobby.

"Hey, Joe." It was Mr. van Buren, and he was brandishing a newspaper. "Did you see what this guy Head wrote?"

A paragraph had been circled in pencil. It said:

> How good is too good? A week or so ago down in Washington, this column covered a press conference at which the young phenom Joe Hardy told reporters his home town was Hannibal, Missouri. It turns out that something is fishy and we don't mean the Mississippi. On the basis of careful investigation, this column now can say that nobody in the town of Hannibal, Missouri, ever heard of Joe Hardy before July 22. How about it, Joe? Why not come clean?

Twice Joe read the paragraph and even after finishing he kept his head down, not ready yet to meet the eyes of Mr. van Buren.

"The guy's crazy," he said finally, with all the conviction he could muster. "What's he trying to do, anyway?"

"That's what I'd like to know," Mr. van Buren replied. "Of all the sour grapes I've ever heard of . . . But we gotta answer him, Joe. A couple of wire-service guys have called me already this morning."

Again Joe raised the paper and studied the paragraph. "How about just ignoring the whole thing?"

"If we do that they'll think you're not on the level. Listen, you *are* from Hannibal, aren't you?"

"Of course I'm from Hannibal."

"Because if you're not, there's no sin in not being from Hannibal. But the point is we've gotta tell 'em something. Now suppose I just say that Joe Hardy completely denies Luster Head's charges. Is that all right with you?"

"Yes, I guess so," Joe said. "Go ahead."

A DAY LATER Joe was again standing in the lobby of the hotel with the manager when a bellboy approached with a telegram in hand. "For Mr. van Buren," he said.

Joe sensed disaster, for his denial of Head's charges had been given prominent space in both the evening and morning papers. He watched while Mr. van Buren tore at the envelope. But Joe's fear was groundless. Mr. van Buren looked puzzled for a moment, then smiled faintly.

"Listen to this. From Roscoe Ent. 'Hereby resign. Send final pay check care of The Dirty Room, 13001 Winnipeg Street, Baltimore.'"

Mr. van Buren shook his head slowly. "Poor old Roscoe," he said. "He was his own worst enemy."

CHAPTER 6

ON THE TRAIN for Washington, Joe sat alone, staring out the window. It was getting to be lousy, all of it. Compounding the lie about Hannibal made it lousy. Robbing Schantz of his no-hitter made it lousy. But most of all Roscoe Ent made it lousy.

Around him were sounds of jubilation. There was talk of the pennant. The Red Sox had edged the Yankees again that afternoon, so the Senators had picked up another game. But looking about at the happy faces of his teammates, Joe could not share their feelings.

There was Mr. Welch and there was Mr. van Buren. There were the fans, miserable as he had been for so many years, and now given hope. There was the thrill in running from the dugout at game time, taking the field with the team, standing out in right field with his cap off while the national anthem was played, feeling bat meet ball and knowing it had been well met.

Yet, in spite of everything, he knew at that moment that if he had the power he would quit being Joe Hardy, there and then.

For the most part the team respected Joe's solitude, although Mr. van Buren had shown troubled eyes going to the diner and again coming back, and finally dropped into the seat beside him.

"What's the trouble, Joe? Something got you down?"

"No. Just tired, I guess."

"Listen, it's not Ent that's bothering you, is it?"

Joe hesitated. "Well, some, I guess."

"Aw, Joe, that's silly. You're not to blame."

"Well, technically I guess I am. If it hadn't been for me, he'd still have his job."

"That's no way to look at it, Joe. Besides, he could still have his job if he wanted it. We didn't fire the guy. He quit. He never belonged in baseball in the first place. Let me tell you about him." Mr. van Buren drew a cigar from his vest, settled back and began the story of Roscoe Ent's life, while Joe listened moodily.

Roscoe Ent had been born near Pocomoke, Maryland, where his people owned a sausage factory. At an early age, Roscoe had forsworn the sausage factory and left home for Baltimore, where he landed a job as shipping clerk and where he also developed a strong attachment for the local burlesque house, whose genially rowdy atmosphere he loved. Soon he had become such an habitué of the theater that he had talked himself into a job as prop man.

For one so dedicated as Roscoe, it apparently had been but a

short step from the prop to the performing end of the business, and it was not long before he had bit parts in the comedy sketches, eventually becoming a comedian in his own right. He was more than happy. Happy, that is, until the demise of burlesque. By 1950 half the houses on the circuit were closed, and in 1955 Roscoe found himself, one day, out of a job.

It struck him then that his talents might be of value to the Washington Senators, whose falling attendance figures were a grave problem.

"And so we hired him," Mr. van Buren continued. "It pained me to do it but, after all, the old St. Louis Browns once sent a midget up to bat. . . . Roscoe really wasn't a bad guy. And actually, he discovered he could throw a dinky little curve. It griped me just on general principles to have him around. I felt more like a ringmaster than a manager. . . ."

Gesticulating with the cigar, van Buren said, "Look, Joe. When you stop to think about it, here's what Ent is saying. He's saying, if you guys aren't going to be a lousy ball club any more, then I won't play. Now what kind of an attitude is that?"

"I guess you're right," Joe said.

"Sure I'm right, boy. Stop worrying about Roscoe Ent. Well, we picked up another game on the Yankees today."

"Yeah, I know. That's fine."

Mr. van Buren left him then, to take part, up the aisle, in a discussion of batting strokes.

Joe slumped low in his seat. What Mr. van Buren had been saying in effect, he realized, was that Roscoe Ent's life was unimportant, even ridiculous. But it was no less important than other lives. It was too late now to do anything about Schantz's no-hitter. But there was still time to do the decent thing where Ent was concerned. And never had there been a time in his life when Joe must be so particular to do the decent thing. Each time he failed, Applegate would gain.

At Baltimore, he slipped unnoticed from the train.

EXCEPT for its name, The Dirty Room was indistinguishable from any of the other night clubs in its immediate neon-suffused

area. It was a corridor of a place, crowded with patrons who sat at tables barely large enough to accommodate a couple of glasses and an ash tray.

All eyes at the moment were on a small stage at the far end where a scantily clad girl was dancing. As Joe ordered a beer the girl finished her act and was replaced by a florid individual who hurried out to the microphone and said:

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, the event you've been waiting for. The Dirty Room is honored to bring you back a name that needs no introduction to Baltimore; once a popular favorite with burlesque fans of every description, and more recently a great favorite at the Washington baseball organization; ladies and gentlemen, we bring you, fresh from his triumph in baseball, our good friend and yours, that funny little fellow, *Ros*-coe ENT!"

And Roscoe, dressed as Joe had never seen him, shuffled out with a complex of leg movements difficult to follow although reminiscent of the movement of a pair of scissors. Wearing a checkered suit with baggy trousers, a black derby, and a bow tie of vast wing span, he stood for a moment at the microphone, looking dead-pan about the room. There was anticipatory laughter.

"I was coming over here tonight," he began, "and a guy comes up to me and he says, 'Hey, buddy, haven't I seen you someplace before?' And I says to him, 'I don't know, have you?' And he says, 'Yeah, wasn't you out with my sister last night?' And I says, 'I didn't know you had a sister,' and he says, 'I haven't.' Then he nodded and walked off. I'd never seen the guy in my life."

From the audience there was only light laughter.

"Don't like that one?" Roscoe asked. "All right, how about another? This guy took a girl out in his car, see? And all during the ride she kept shaking her head 'no.' It was thirty-five miles before he realized her nose was caught in the windshield wiper."

A bulb glowed from the center of his bow tie but the laughter was still thin. Watching intently, Joe saw the bravado fade from Ent's face, replaced for an instant by despair.

"'At guy stinks," the bartender said. "I thought he was supposed to be funny, or something."

Somebody in the audience booed. Roscoe stiffened, and walked

slowly around before the microphone. "What's the matter with you people? Where do you think you are, anyway? At a wake?"

"I've been to funnier wakes," somebody shouted.

Suddenly, at a signal unseen to Joe, the three-piece band began playing with as much volume as possible. The same florid man who had introduced Roscoe hurried onto the stage and ushered him toward the wing, managing to clap at the same time.

A lean man in a double-breasted suit was rushed to the stage and began playing a harmonica. The patrons slowly settled back in their seats.

THE DRESSING-ROOM door was open a crack and Joe could see Roscoe sitting at a makeshift dressing table, contrived from an orange crate and covered with newspaper. His derby lay on the floor.

"I don't get it, Ros, I just don't get it." The speaker was out of sight, but Joe judged it was the florid man who had introduced Roscoe. "Boy, you ain't like you used to be when you was over at the Lyceum."

"Okay, so I'm sorry," Roscoe said, yanking off his bow tie. "So I won't be around to bother you any more."

"Look, Ros, I'm sorry. I tried to help you out, but I can't take a chance. It's tough enough to make a living as it is."

"Okay, so I'll go."

"Where you gonna go?"

Roscoe sighed. "I don't know yet. My heart ain't in it no more, Max. I don't know what it is. Maybe I'm spoiled from baseball." Again he sighed. "Sometimes you feel like being funny and sometimes you don't."

"That was the biggest mistake you ever made, going over to that baseball," Max said, and with these words he opened the door and brushed past Joe without even a show of curiosity.

As Joe stepped into the room, Ent turned and regarded him without surprise. "Well, if it ain't Joe flashy-pants," he said. "I saw you back there at the bar. I might as well known my goose was cooked with you here, you jinxer, you."

"Listen, Roscoe," Joe said. "I'd like to talk to you a minute."

"We ain't got nothing to talk about, Hardy," Roscoe said. Then he cocked his head and frowned, listening. From outside there came loud laughter, spontaneous and uncontrolled, the laughter of an audience held captive.

"Who's so funny?" Roscoe muttered.

Putting on his derby, he hurried out, Joe following. Max, with a pleased expression, stood in the wing. "Who's so funny?" Roscoe repeated.

"It was just some guy in the audience," Max said. "Guy just walked up to the stage and said he'd like to do a number." He broke off, laughing heartily.

Joe stood at a distance. "How about a beer, Roscoe?" he said.

"Okay," Roscoe said, "I'll watch him from outside. Come on, Hardy. I'll promise to drink a glass of beer if you promise to drink a glass of rat poison. Okay?"

"I wish you wouldn't feel that way, Roscoe."

"Okay, old pal," Roscoe said, reaching up and clapping Joe on the back. "I got nothing but esteem for you, old pal, because you made me lose my job, old pal." Looking up at Joe, he scowled.

They took a table at the rear, and when Joe looked toward the stage and recognized the performer he didn't even feel surprise. Anything connected with Applegate was no longer surprising.

For the performer was Applegate. Applegate dressed in a gray suit and snap-brim hat, and saying, "Who was that ladle I seen you out with last night? That was no ladle, that was my knife."

Roscoe groaned and held his nose, but his reaction was lost in the rising swell of laughter.

It was then that Applegate spied Joe and, waving, he called, "Hi, Joe, how's the boy? Long time, no see. Ladies and gentlemen, in case you don't know it, you've got a celebrity in your midst tonight. That fresh-faced lad back there with the crew cut, sitting with the little fellow in the derby hat, is none other than the fabulous Joe Hardy of the Washington baseball club."

Not half the celebrity you are, Joe thought sardonically, but he stood and bowed. Heads turned and cheers went up.

As Applegate launched again into his routine, Ent said bitterly,

"I've seen some crumby guys in my life, Hardy, but you're about the crumbiest. What is this, a put-up job between you and your friend up there to kill my act?"

Joe shook his head, smiling sadly. "Everywhere I turn I seem to put my foot in it as far as you're concerned, Roscoe. . . . I didn't know he was going to be here tonight. I came to apologize — and to see if I could persuade you to go back to the team. I don't see why you had to quit in the first place."

"Listen, Hardy, I may not be the big shot you are, but even little shots got some pride. I could tell nobody wanted me. All anybody thought about any more was winning ball games."

"You can't blame a team for that," Joe said.

"Those Washington Senators got no business even thinking about winning. I had that figured for a lifetime job."

"It can still be a lifetime job," Joe said. "Will you take my word for something, Roscoe?"

"Why should I?"

"Because it's to your own advantage. Go back and keep your job and I'll give you my word that in a few weeks everything will be back to normal again. The team'll be glad to have you there for next season."

"How come?"

"That's all I can tell you," Joe said. "You'll just have to take my word for it. And don't tell anybody I told you, either."

There was a thunderous burst of applause, to which Applegate responded with repeated bows, then jumped nimbly from the stage and threaded his way among the tables.

"Joseph, Joseph," he said fondly, pulling up a chair. "Draw me a milk, madam," he said to the waitress. "With a little cheese. Joseph, my boy, how's it going? I see you're in good company."

"Mr. Applegate, Mr. Ent," Joe said grimly.

"Sure, I've seen Mr. Ent at the games," Applegate said jovially. They shook hands. "Well, Joseph," he continued, "I see by the papers you had a splendid road trip."

Applegate's right hand now lay flat on the table, and Joe saw the index finger move slightly and point to Ent, who, although he did not notice, nevertheless rose immediately, as if in alarm.

"Excuse me, I've got to go to the little boys' room," he said, hurrying off.

"Rather clever, eh?" Applegate said when he had gone.

"Listen, Applegate," Joe said, "I don't mind telling you I don't like the way things are going."

"For instance?"

"For instance, Roscoe Ent."

"What about him?"

"He's lost his job and it's my fault."

"Well . . . " Applegate wet his forefinger and went about the table gathering crumbs of cheese. "Come to think of it, the little fellow has had a tough go of it lately, for a fact. Now maybe we could make redress to him."

Joe looked up suspiciously. "What kind of redress?" he asked. "And with what kind of strings attached?"

Applegate looked off toward the opposite wall with a bemused expression. "I don't know, but Mr. Ent certainly has had an incredible streak of bad luck, for certain."

"Lay off," Joe said.

Applegate looked hurt. "Joe . . ." he said, "don't be unpleasant. We're having a nice evening out together. . . ."

"All I want Ent to do is go take his old job back," Joe said. "So let's leave it at that. And now I want to talk to you about me. What's—"

He broke off, because at that moment three young ladies appeared at his elbow and asked for his autograph.

"You ought to get *his* autograph," Joe said, gesturing toward Applegate. "Then you'd really have something."

"Oh, Joe," Applegate said deprecatingly.

Joe signed his name, then signed again and again, and when he looked up Applegate had disappeared. Jumping up, he hurried to the men's room. No sign of Ent. No sign of Applegate.

Joe had circled the block and started off at a new tangent, when, far ahead, he spied them. He began to run and, as he drew near, Applegate, without turning, called, "Hi, Joe. Mr. Ent and I were just going to have a little talk. I'm glad you joined us."

"Listen," Joe said, "what are you up to, Applegate?"

"Why don't you blow, Hardy?" Ent said. "Why don't you go catch a pop fly, or something?"

Applegate laughed appreciatively. "Roscoe," he said, "you've really got quite a sense of humor, boy."

"Applegate, I'm warning you," Joe said.

"Listen, Joe," Applegate said with irritation, "you live your life and I'll live mine. I'm just trying to help out a fellow who's had a bad run of luck. You said yourself you felt sorry for him."

"Blow, Hardy," Ent said.

"Well," Applegate said, "as long as he won't blow, I suppose we'll have to proceed anyway. Now, Mr. Ent," he went on, clapping Roscoe on the shoulder, "how would you like to be a bona fide major-league pitcher?"

"Pitcher?" Roscoe echoed. "How'm I gonna be any pitcher?"

With guilt in his heart, Joe remembered the similar question he had asked the night Applegate had first appeared.

"Just take my word for it," Applegate said. "You can be a fabuously successful pitcher, replete with sliders and sinkers and hooks and pinpoint control and blinding speed—such a pitcher as has not been seen since the days of Christy Mathewson and Walter Johnson."

Roscoe laughed. "I think you're pulling my leg," he said.

"Not in the slightest, Roscoe," Applegate said. "Suppose you take your pitcher's stance. That's right. Now go into your motion and follow through. . . . I know you've done some pitching before, but doesn't it feel different somehow?"

"It sure does," Roscoe said, straightening up again. "Coördination seems better somehow. I feel like I could throw a ball through the side of a locomotive."

"Right, Roscoe."

Applegate lit a cigarette with the now familiar snap of his fingers. This was not lost on Roscoe, who said admiringly, "Hey! That would kill 'em back in The Dirty Room. How about teaching me?"

"That's not something you teach somebody," Joe said.

"Not so much noise, Hardy," Applegate said. "So, Roscoe, my

boy, how would you like to be a pitcher?"

"Say no, Roscoe," Joe said quickly. "I'm telling you this for your own good."

"So why should I tell him no?" Roscoe said.

"Roscoe," Joe asked, glancing swiftly at Applegate, "don't you know who this man is? Did you see how he lit that cigarette?"

"I've seen guys do that in burlesque," Roscoe said. "Go on now, Hardy, let us alone. Go sign your autographs."

"Roscoe . . ." there was a low, distant rumble of thunder in the east ". . . this guy isn't any song and dance man. He's the devil."

For a few seconds no one spoke.

"The devil!" Roscoe said nervously. He edged away from Applegate. "Is Hardy serious?"

Applegate drew himself up to his full height. "I've never been one to deny my roots," he said pompously.

"I don't believe it," Roscoe said. "I don't—"

But without finishing, he turned and ran with the speed of a sprinter. Joe watched as the small form faded into the darkness.



Applegate was laughing. "The one that got away," he said. "That was quite a spectacle," he went on admiringly. "The little fellow really can run, can't he, Joe?"

"Is that all you've got to say?"

"Ah, Joe, I never dreamed you'd take such a disapproving attitude. You've changed since I last saw you."

"I've changed plenty," Joe said. "I'm sick of this whole business. I want you to change me back. Right now. Tonight."

"You're a little bit premature, lad. This isn't September twenty-first by a long shot. Remember the contract."

"Nuts to the contract," Joe said. "Somebody who just tried to pull something like that wouldn't pay any attention to a contract anyway. Come on now, you fourflusher . . . "

Applegate chuckled, but stopped abruptly. "Joe, don't tax my sense of humor too far, lad. I like a certain amount of spunk, but when it becomes downright rudeness . . . well, just remember one thing, Joe. I'm still the only one can turn Joe Hardy back into Joe Boyd. So maybe you'd better be a little more respectful. . . . "

Joe stared Applegate defiantly in the eye. "You mean you refuse?"

"Yes, I must refuse, lad, but . . . "

Joe blinked to clear the film from his eyes, but there was no film. Applegate had simply disappeared, in mid-sentence.

CHAPTER 7

AT BATTING PRACTICE next afternoon Joe spied Lola taking a seat in her customary box. He noticed how grave her eyes were, how immobile her exquisite face as she watched him approach.

"Tonight?" she said when he asked if she were busy. "Well, it seems to me that the last time we were together you left me in the car. I'm not sure where I'd be immune from desertion Unless maybe in a canoe." She smiled, lowering her eyes.

"I'm sorry about leaving you that day," Joe said. "But, Lola, this is pretty important. I need your help."

"On the other hand," she went on archly, "even if we took a

canoe, you might swim to shore, and it would be tiresome to be stranded in a moving canoe. But I guess a canoe is as safe as any."

"Are you serious about the canoe?" he asked. "Okay, anywhere you say, only I've never paddled a canoe in my life."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," she said. "You should know that doesn't matter, Joe."

SILENTLY Joe dipped the blade, impressed in spite of himself by the deftness and power of his stroke.

"See?" Lola said, trailing her hand in the water. "You paddle beautifully, Joe. You could probably win a paddling championship, if you wanted to."

"Winning a paddling championship isn't what's on my mind right now," Joe said as they glided swiftly downstream. "It's your friend Applegate."

"I thought that's probably why you wanted to see me," she said somberly.

"Lola, I need your help," Joe said. "Except—"

"Except what, Joe?"

"Well," he said, "I don't know how I stand with you. Will you answer me one question truthfully? Are you hooked?"

"Hooked?"

"You know what I mean."

She did not reply at once, intently smoothing the surface of the water with her palm. Finally, she said, "Yes, Joe, I am."

"Gosh, Lola," he said, "why did you do it?"

She laughed softly. "Oh, a lot of reasons, most of them very personal. Don't worry about me, Joe."

"Are you on a permanent basis?"

"Yes, quite permanent."

"Poor Lola," he said.

"I'm not really an object of pity, Joe. It happened a long while ago, and I'm quite used to it in many ways. . . ."

For a time they moved in silence, broken only by the swirling sound of the water as he dipped the blade. Presently he said, "Let me ask you this, Lola. Were you ever on a temporary basis? A trial period? Did you plan for it to be permanent?"

"No," she said. "I thought I'd just have a taste of it, but when May fourteenth came Mr. Applegate was far too smart for me, it turned out. He's very farsighted."

From an island off to the right, a night bird screeched and the sound became thin and then faded as the bird flew rapidly off.

With a chill running along his spine, Joe asked, "What happened? How was he too smart for you?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that, Joe. I'd like to but I can't."

Cursing under his breath, he paddled swiftly. The river bent to the right, bringing the lights of Memorial Bridge into view.

"Joe . . . don't fight it. There's no use."

"Huh! We'll see when September twenty-first comes."

"Well, if it comes—and goes—at least you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that your cause was worthy," Lola said. "You know, it's absurd in a way, but everywhere I go there's such a bitter antagonism against the Yankees."

He stopped paddling, letting the canoe slip slowly with the current, his imagination rampant with conjecture, with fear, with grim determination.

"I haven't helped you much, have I?" she asked presently.

He sighed. "It's not your fault, I suppose."

"I wish I could help you," she said. "Every woman wants to help the man she loves."

"The what?"

Lola laughed softly. "I'm in love with you, Joe."

For perhaps ten strokes, Joe did not reply, and then he said, "You know that's ridiculous, Lola."

"Not at all. It's certainly not abnormal. Probably a good sixty percent of the women in America have a crush on you."

"Well, they're crazy. And besides, you wouldn't have the slightest interest in me if it hadn't been for Applegate."

"Mr. Applegate introduced us, Joe. . . ." She looked at him over her shoulder. "But falling in love with you was my own idea."

"But don't you know who I am?"

"I know you're Joe Hardy. That's all I need to know. And furthermore, Applegate said that after September twenty-first, after it becomes permanent . . . I could . . . have you. I mean, you'd

be mine. So naturally I want you to keep on being Joe Hardy." She slid gracefully from the seat and stretched herself full length in the bottom of the canoe, adjusting a pillow at his feet, and resting her head on the pillow.

"You're very handsome, Joe Hardy," she said, arching her neck and looking up at him.

"And you're the most beautiful girl in the world," he said bitterly. "The greatest baseball player and the most beautiful girl in a canoe on a beautiful night, and isn't that just too sweet?"

But his eyes were drawn involuntarily to her face and he found it beautiful in the faint light of the moon hanging over the river.

"Joe, please don't be like that. Look on the bright side."

He grunted. "Where is it?"

"There is a bright side, Joe. When the season ends, we could travel. We could go to France, to Provence. How would you like to go to Provence? It is so beautiful, so civilized there. . . . "

"I never heard of it," he said, but he felt himself growing soft inside. Her eyes were closed now, and her soft hair blew gently about her temples.

"Other ballplayers . . . they go hunting and things like that in the off season, don't they?" she asked. "We could go to Provence and then when spring training starts we could go to Florida."

She reached for his hand. "Stop paddling a minute, Joe. Why don't you get down here beside me? We could just float."

He looked down, following the long, slender line of her body. "I'm afraid the canoe might tip over, Lola," he said huskily. "I weigh more than you do." Determinedly, he began to count the lights on the bridge ahead.

For a long while, Lola lay there without speaking, looking up at the stars; and then she said, "I suppose I'll have to be content to wait until after September twenty-first."

CHAPTER 8

DAY BY DAY, the box scores chronicled a story long to be remembered in baseball annals. Relentlessly, the Senators ground down the hapless opposition. Overtaking first the White

Sox, then the Orioles, they entered second place only seven and a half games behind the Yankees, and now it seemed only a question of time.

Yet to Joe, his own role had become anathema. It was true that he could still find faint pleasure in noticing the expressions of transport on the faces of Mr. van Buren and Mr. Welch; he was touched often by the happiness of the other members of the team. But the sight of a ball arching from his bat into home-run territory was now something that sickened him. Still he could not stop hitting them; no more than he could prevent himself from hitting that ball that had ruined poor Bobby Shantz's no-hitter.

Lola was still present at each game, always in the same seat, wearing the same demure, faintly saddened expression. But now he read into the look something more. About her whole attitude now there was an aspect of waiting, of patience and of confidence. She was waiting until the day she could claim him for her own.

His nights were torture, filled with feverish dreams in which Lola and Applegate were always with him. He took to going to movie houses or walking the streets alone.

And then came the evening when he found himself not far from the modest suburban house he had heedlessly left so long ago. Recognizing the neighborhood brought a faint lift in spirits and, changing route, he began walking more swiftly. But it was now past midnight, and when he reached the old familiar block the house was dark. He could see clearly only his old rocker on the side porch, dimly white, ghostlike, a rocker with no one to rock.

With a heavy heart, Joe turned away.

But the next night he returned, earlier in the evening, and the pain of what he found now was even worse. For the house was filled with light and with gay sound, with the shrieks of women and occasionally the bark of a dog. A dog? Whose dog?

Pacing circumspectly, he caught a glimpse. In the living room, seated about the table, were Bess and her bridge cronies. Laughter. Bright lights. A dog. On the door of this house there was no crepe.

A FEW DAYS later, early on the morning of the next to last game of the Tiger series, he walked up the front steps, shoulders resolute,

purpose clear in mind. Through the screen door, he could see all the way back to the kitchen, where she stood at the sink, her back and hips broad in a yellow floor-length garment. Sighing, he knocked.

It was as though he had set an infernal machine in motion. There was a frenzied slipping of clawed pads on a bare floor; then a malevolent growl that ascended into frantic barking as the little black beast negotiated the short distance from wherever he had been stationed and stood scowling up through the screen door.

"Joe!" Bess called sharply, and he experienced a second of shock before he realized that she was speaking not to him but to the dog.

Wiping her hands on her apron, she came toward the door, saying, "Yes?"

Although in recent years he had seemed to lose awareness of her eyes, he noticed them now, noticed how jolly and kindly they were. Pale blue in color, they lit her face, drew attention from the fleshiness of chin and neck and the gray of her hair. He was struck again by the gentle refinement of her face, its thin, gracefully modeled nose, the pleasant eyes.

A lump formed in his throat, and he stood, unable to speak.

Bess, he was saying in his mind. *Bess, it's Joe. I've come back. I've done a terrible thing. I sold my soul to the devil so the team would win . . . so the Yankees would lose. I thought it would be worth it, but it wasn't. You've got to help me.*

"What can I do for you?" she asked. It was not a querulous question, but sympathetic, patient.



Smiling, he raised his hand in a wave of greeting. The dog growled.

"Is it about the room?" Bess asked.

What room? What was she talking about? But the words that passed his lips were, "Yes, it's about the room."

In his mind's eye he had a picture of Applegate, in some distant corner of the world, looking this way and pushing a button.

"Oh, certainly," she said. "Now, if you'll just wait until I leash Joe . . . "

In a few seconds she reappeared and opened the screen door for him. He followed her past the living room and up the stairs.

"Now," she said, "as a matter of fact I have two rooms I could show you. . . . This little front room here faces on the street. My daughter used to sleep there before she was married. And then we have a larger room in the back." He followed her down the hall. "This is the one I advertised in the paper." Joe entered behind her, speechless.

Bess, this is ridiculous, he said to himself. *I didn't come to rent any room. I'm your husband. Besides, you don't need to rent any rooms. After all that money I mailed you from Boston . . .*

But what he heard himself say was, "This is a wonderful room. How much would this be?"

"This room is eight dollars a week."

"That's fair enough. When would I be able to move in?"

"Now here is the bathroom," she said. "Oh, any time you like. Right away, if you'd like to." She led the way downstairs again, and he followed her into the living room.

"Well," she said, "that's all I can think of. You see, this is kind of new to me. I've never had roomers before, but my husband is away for a while and since I'm rather lonely I thought I'd put the ad in the paper. . . . Oh, there is one more thing." She frowned. "The bridge girls said I ought to ask for references. I hate to ask people for references, so if you would rather not . . . "

"My name is Hardy," he said. "Joe Hardy . . . I'm with the baseball team—"

"Joe Hardy! Well, I'm honored. I thought your face was familiar, Mr. Hardy." She brushed back a wisp of hair, flustered. "Well, I guess that takes care of the references in a hurry."

All trace of the lump in his throat suddenly gone, Joe thought scornfully, *Face looks familiar! How would you know who Joe Hardy is? You don't know second base from the center-field flagpole.*

He asked, "Are you a baseball fan?"

"To tell you the truth, I didn't use to be," she said. "Once I

couldn't stand baseball. Loathed it. It's just rather recently . . . just since my husband's been away, in fact, that I became fond of it." She paused. "Did I say something wrong?"

"Not at all," Joe said.

"You see, my husband is a great baseball fan. I guess he's probably the greatest baseball fan in the whole United States, or close to it, and after he left I had a little talk with myself. I decided that maybe a wife owed it to her husband to develop the same interests he has and so . . . " She smiled. "That's why I did it, because it really used to be a very sore point between us, and I decided it just wasn't fair to him. Some husbands even divorce their wives for less."

Miserably confused by now, Joe stared down at the dog, which lay leashed to a leg of the sofa.

"Besides," Bess went on, "the town's so excited about the team. Even the bridge girls . . . it's rather hard not to get excited too. And we owe it all to you, Mr. Hardy. That's why I can't wait to tell everybody that you're going to room right here in my house. My husband, I know, would be beside himself with excitement if he knew. . . . Well, anyway, will you move in sometime today?"

"Yes," Joe said thickly. "Either this afternoon or tonight after the game. I only have a couple of suitcases."

"All right, Mr. Hardy. I'll be expecting you. . . . By the way, I haven't even told you my name. It's Mrs. Boyd . . . Mrs. Joseph Boyd." She laughed. "That makes three Joes. You. My husband. And little Joe here."

THE GAME was over by eleven, and it was just midnight when he arrived, noticing even as he stepped from the taxi that the girls were gathered about the bridge table.

Carrying his suitcases, he walked up the steps to the accompaniment of Joe the dog's barking, somewhere deep within the house.

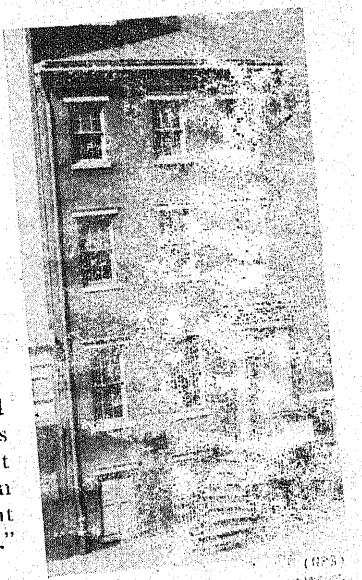
"Mr. Hardy, is that you?" It was Bess's voice and, he noticed with disgust, it sounded a shade coy.

"Yes, ma'am," he said, setting down the suitcases. From within the room there was subdued giggling, apropos, so far as he could determine, of nothing.

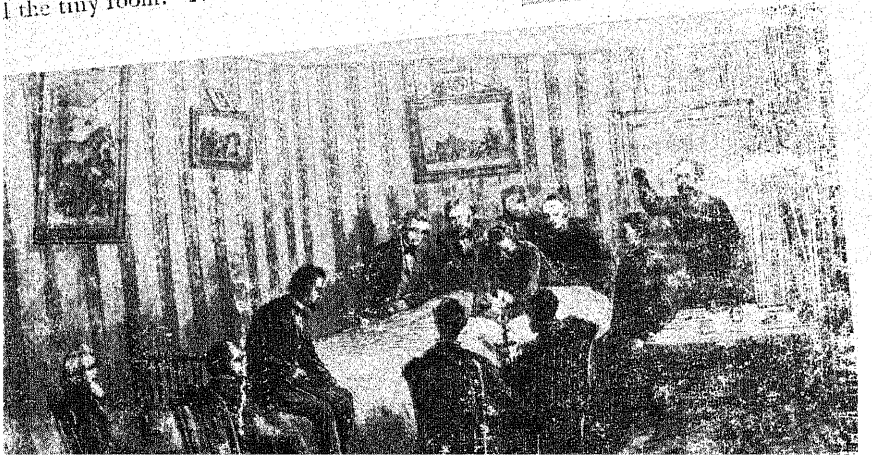


(SL)

d to a house across the street, the unconscious
ent was laid on a bed pulled away from the
) accommodate his tall figure diagonally.
e death watch continued all night. The Presi-
never regained consciousness. People came and
Robert Lincoln alternately watched over his
; father and comforted his mother in the next
. At 7:22 in the morning Abraham Lincoln
. Secretary of War Stanton broke the silence that
l the tiny room: "Now he belongs to the ages."



(NPS)



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"Would you like to come in for a moment?" Bess called. "I have some ladies who would like to meet you."

And to his surprise, although they were gathered about the bridge table, there were no cards in sight.

"Girls," Bess was saying, "I want you to meet Mr. Hardy. Mrs. Kirk, Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Buckner."

He smiled and then felt the smile freeze. It was ridiculous being introduced to Sara Palmer and Phyllis Kirk and Polly Buckner, when they'd been lousing up his evenings for years.

"Gee, you were wonderful tonight, Mr. Hardy," said Phyllis Kirk, who fancied herself still girlish. "Wasn't he just *won*derful, girls?"

The others chorused agreement, and Bess said, "The girls and I watched you on TV tonight, Mr. Hardy. Not a speck of bridge did we play all evening. . . ."

"Mr. Hardy." Polly Buckner produced a scrap of paper and a pencil from her purse. "Would you mind signing this for my son? Just sign 'To Ted Buckner — Joe Hardy.'"

Joe did so, and she said, "I'm afraid Ted's going to be camping on your doorstep. He's so excited."

"And, Mr. Hardy," Phillis Kirk said, "we have a request to make. Could you get the four of us some World Series tickets?"

Joe smiled. "It's a little early for that."

"Oh, but it's certain you're going to win, isn't it?" Sara Palmer said.

"The Yankees might have something to say about that," Joe said. "No tickets are on sale yet."

"But would you put in our names, the four of us, so our order will be in?" Phyllis Kirk said.

"Well, yes, I'll be glad to," he said. "Well, it was very nice meeting you ladies."

Bess said, "We're going to have refreshments in a few minutes, Mr. Hardy. Won't you have something?"

"That's very kind of you," Joe said, "but I guess I ought to be getting to bed."

"He has to get plenty of sleep so as to knock the ball well, isn't that right, Mr. Hardy?" Polly Buckner said.

"Hit the ball well, you mean," Sara Palmer said. "Knock the ball sounds clumsy."

"Mr. Hardy," Bess said, "I didn't realize, but they said on TV tonight that you were leaving for Boston tomorrow night."

"Boston first, then Cleveland," he said.

"Then you won't be here for a while," Bess said.

"I guess not," he said.

"Sleep well," they said, as he picked up his suitcases and climbed the stairs.

CLOSING the door firmly behind him, Joe sat on the edge of the bed for a while and looked out the window. From downstairs came a low, sustained flutter of conversation, punctuated at times by shrieks. He smiled faintly. What they were having down there was something in the nature of a tenth inning.

Finally he began to undress and then, as was his habit, headed for the bathroom to change into his pajamas. As he opened the door, the voices below rose up in a wave of sound, and riding the crest was the voice of Sara Palmer, shrilling, "Oh, Bess, molded tuna, my absolute favorite!"

By the time he left the bathroom he was deep in thought and from long habit headed automatically for the bedroom he had shared over the years with Bess. He was halfway down the hall when a hoarse voice called, "Hey!"

He turned, and although there was no sign of Applegate it was certainly Applegate's voice.

"Hey, Joe, wrong room," it said in a hoarse whisper. "You'd scare her to death if she came up and found a right fielder in her bed."

Applegate laughed, eminently pleased with his joke.

Joe walked slowly to the back room and turned on the overhead light. No sign of Applegate. He sat on the bed, thinking what a huge joke this must be to Applegate — the dog named Joe; Bess becoming a fan; his being a roomer in his own house. Applegate stopped at nothing. But this time Joe would not whimper or beseech. He had done enough beseeching. It was time for action. Applegate played dirty. But two could play the game.

NEXT MORNING he heard the clock downstairs strike ten. He turned over and went back to sleep.

Later he was wakened by a tap at the door. "Mr. Hardy. It's almost twelve o'clock. The game starts at two thirty, doesn't it?"

"Yes," Joe said. "Thanks, Mrs. Boyd."

He turned over and went back to sleep.

"Mr. Hardy!" Her voice this time was alarmed. "It's after one o'clock."

"Oh, really?" he said. "Well, I guess I'd better hustle."

He smiled, nestling back under the sheet. As he dozed off he seemed to hear Bess's voice from a great distance, explaining, lamenting.

When she returned again, she said, "Mr. Hardy, you're wanted on the telephone. It's Mr. van Buren."

"How did he know where I was?"

"I called the ball-park office," she said apologetically. "I thought they ought to know you weren't . . . Did I do wrong?"

Joe yawned. "I don't know," he said. "It doesn't matter much, I guess. Tell him I can't possibly talk to him."

"He sounds upset."

"Tell him I won't be able to make it today."

"But Mr. Hardy, the team needs you. They might lose." Her voice was anguished.

He smiled. "I'm very sleepy. I don't feel up to snuff exactly."

She sighed and went away.

When she returned the next time, she asked if she might come in. Pulling the sheet firmly in place, he said, "Okay."

She had carried the radio from the side porch. "I thought maybe you'd like to listen to the game," she said, stooping to the outlet. "It's already tuned to the right station. Nobody's touched that radio, I guess, since the last night my husband listened to it. He was a great fan."

Her voice caught slightly and she turned away. Then she said, "Would you like me to call a doctor, Mr. Hardy?"

"No, thanks. I'll be all right. I just need a little rest."

"Well, you enjoy yourself and if you want anything just call me. When does the team leave for Boston?"

"Right after the game," Joe said. "But I won't be going."

"Oh, Mr. *Hardy*. They'll never catch the Yankees."

Joe shrugged. "Maybe I'll be able to join them in a few days or so," he said.

With a final worried look, she closed the door. The familiar voice of the play-by-play announcer, the voice he had been listening to for almost twenty years now, filled the room.

The innings passed, the sun moved, and Joe dozed. He had all but forgotten the pleasure of listening to a baseball game.

THIS TIME he was awakened by the frenzied barking of Joe the dog, then was aware of footsteps on the stairs. He came alert in time to hear the announcer say, ". . . and the score at the end of the seventh remains, Tigers six and Senators one. Ladies and gentlemen, it's beginning to look as if the phenomenal winning streak of the Washington Senators is going to end. . . ."

And then the tap at the door. "Mr. Hardy," Bess said, "Mr. Welch is here to see you."

"Come in."

"Well, son," Adam Welch said, shuffling hesitantly into the room and extending one gnarled hand, "I'm certainly sorry to hear you're under the weather. Certainly sorry . . ."

"It's a bad time to get sick," Joe said, shaking his hand and noting the concern in the pale blue eyes. "I'm sorry I couldn't play today."

"Oh, don't worry about that, son." Mr. Welch sat down and folded his hands on one knee. "That's not important. I just came out to see if I could do anything for you. I always visit my players when they get sick. Now is there anything you need?"

"No, sir, I don't believe so, thanks."

"You won't feel well enough to leave for Boston tonight, of course?"

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Welch," Joe said, unable to look the old man in the eye.

"Well, you just stay there in bed until you feel better," Mr. Welch said. His hands trembled, Joe noticed, unless he held them securely against his knee.



"If you feel like going out to meet the team later, well and good," the old man said. "But if you don't, that's well and good too."

They both listened silently as the Tigers' third baseman made a flashy pickup to retire the Senators in the seventh.

"Looks like we might lose today," Mr. Welch said in his quavering voice. "But you can't win 'em all. If there's anything I've learned in my life, it's that you can't win 'em all, Joe."

"No, sir," Joe said.

With trembling hand then, the club owner reached into his vest pocket and withdrew a huge gold watch and a heavy chain.

"Joe," he said, "see this watch." He held it up. "See these initials." He pointed to heavily scrolled, concentric initials on the cover. "This watch was given to me by some fans when I was playing ball myself. That was over sixty years ago. Here, have a look."

Carefully he passed over the watch for Joe's inspection. On the inside cover was an inscription, "To Adam Welch, in gratitude from the fans of Binghamton."

"It's a beautiful watch," Joe said, passing it back.

"No." Mr. Welch paused dramatically, head erect. "Joe, I want you to keep that watch. In memory of me." His voice faltered. "You see, it's time I started passing out a few things anyway," he said, trying to smile. "The doc says I won't be around when spring training starts next year. So, this is my last season." Again he tried to smile, but his eyes were filled with tears.

"Mr. Welch, I don't deserve this," Joe said. "I appreciate it, sir, but why not give it to some member of your family?"

"Haven't got any family left, son. I want you to have it because without you . . . the last summer of my life . . . couldn't have been nearly as happy as you've made it."

Mr. Welch rose. "That's mainly why I came out here, Joe. And to tell you not to move from this bed until you're feeling better. Good-bye, son."

And as he left the room, the radio told of the Senators coming up in the eighth, still trailing by five runs.

Joe Hardy rose slowly from bed. He looked at the watch, still in his hand. Although it was too late now to save today's game, he still had time to get to the station before the train left for Boston.

CHAPTER 9

Two could play the game. And yet in any contest at indecency, how could Joe, or anyone else in the world, best Applegate? If there was hope of survival, it did not lie in any such petty stratagem as refusing to leave his bedroom; it lay rather in keeping his integrity whole, in playing the game as decently as he knew how, in regarding the contract as a document to be respected down to the last comma.

Joe knew in his heart that he could never have played it dirty, knew it was not in him to play Applegate's game. A man who had always lived a decent life, Joe was fated to live decently still, even to the end of his natural life, which might, he realized, be not far off.

Although it had not been many days since Joe had felt it a matter of no personal concern whether the Senators won or lost the pennant, he cared, and cared deeply. He realized this fact from the second Mr. Welch gave him the watch. To remain rooted in bed would have been derelict in his duty to a group of men whom he had carried to the threshold of immortality. To dump them would have been an unforgivable breach of allegiance to his teammates, who had given the big try; to Mr. van Buren, who idolized him; and to Mr. Welch, who had given him a gold watch.

THEIR WINNING streak snapped by the Tigers, the Senators rebounded like champions. Taking both ends of the Labor Day double-header at Boston, they journeyed west to Cleveland, bopping the Indians three straight; thence to Detroit, where suitable revenge was exacted with four from the Tigers. Doubling back then, they took three in Baltimore; and finally to Chicago, where a victory in the first game extended the new winning streak to thirteen straight. On the morning of the second game, the Senators found themselves only three games back of the first-place Yankees. This was on September fifteenth.

When Joe stepped into the lobby that morning on his way to breakfast, he had taken no more than five steps when he was arrested by the sight of his teammates' faces raised from newspapers. All eyes were upon him. On every face a question.

Joe stopped short, his eye caught by a banner headline two inches high. The words stared at him:

STAR BALLPLAYER ACCUSED AS PHONY

His heart leapt up and choked him. His face burned.

Joe Hardy Called Harmful to Baseball; Ouster Recommended

Guiltily he looked about the lobby. And although his impulse was to turn and flee, he picked up the paper and read:

New York, September 14 — A noted sports columnist said tonight he is ready to give the Baseball Commissioner indisputable evidence that Joe Hardy, star right fielder for the Washington Senators, is a "phony and a poseur" whose continued presence in the line-up is an "insult to the American League."

The accusation was made in a prepared statement by Luster Head, columnist for the New York *Bugle,* who said he has asked the Commissioner to schedule a hearing for the purpose of airing his charges. These are so damaging, the columnist said, as to warrant young Hardy's expulsion from organized baseball.

Head stated that young Hardy lied in allegedly saying at a press conference some weeks ago that he is a native of Hannibal, Missouri. Beyond this, the columnist declined to reveal the substance of his charges for the present, but said they were based on personal investigation and on information volunteered by a "former associate" of the Washington ball club. He did not identify his informant.

Head said it was "entirely possible and certainly desirable" that as a result of his findings every game won by the Senators since young Hardy joined the team would be changed in the league standings to a game lost.

A shadow fell across the page. When Joe looked up, there stood Benny van Buren. "What is all this stuff, Joe?" he asked quietly. "What's this guy got on you?"

Joe stared at the floor, conscious of the unnatural quiet of the lobby; conscious too that he must force words to his lips.

But when they came, they came easily, naturally. "You tell me, Ben," he said evenly. "Then we'll both know. Personally I think the guy's been having nightmares."

"You mean there's nothing to it? Nothing in your past life you're ashamed of?"

"Not a thing, Ben," he said, facing Mr. van Buren's steady gaze. "My hands are clean."

Mr. van Buren expelled his breath with a long, whistling sound and dropped to a sofa.

"Now the question is, can you prove it?"

"Prove it?" Joe demanded. "What am *I* supposed to prove? He's the one making the accusations."

"Listen, Joe, don't get me wrong. I'm with you one hundred percent. The only thing is, we got a wire from the Commissioner's office saying you're suspended until you can clear yourself. They've scheduled a hearing and you're supposed to be there."

Joe shook his head. "Here I'm supposed to defend myself and I don't even know what the charges are. When is the hearing?"

"It's the twenty-first. Well, there's one specific thing — that Hannibal business. Now — "

"The twenty-*first*? Why the twenty-first? Why so long?"

"Well that's . . . what? Six days. That's about normal."

"Okay," Joe said grimly. "So it's the twenty-first."

"The only trouble is the team," Mr. van Buren said. "Look, Joe, I'm not worried so much about you. I know we can ram this thing down Head's throat. What worries me is the team's morale. Some of the guys sound pretty discouraged. How about making a little speech to them, Joe? I'll get 'em all together up in my room and you do the necessary. And after that, I think the best thing for all concerned would be for you to beat it back to Washington to wait for the hearing."

THE ROOM was filled when he arrived. Filled with the men whose faces now were so familiar; faces that showed concern, anxiety, but certainly no ill feeling.

"What did you do, Joe?" somebody asked. "Rob a bank or something?"

"You musta been having dates with that Head guy's wife," somebody else said.

He smiled. These were men waiting to be convinced but willing

to give him the benefit of the doubt, and sensing this brought a lump to Joe's throat.

"Fellows," he said at last, "I think you'll agree with me that this is a rough position to be in. Here I am being accused of something and I don't even know what it is. But there's one thing I can say from the bottom of my heart. Whatever Head's talking about — it's a lie."

There was a stir of relief.

"Next Thursday," he went on, "there's going to be a hearing. I'll be there, and you can bet your life I'm going to ram whatever Head says down his throat. All I ask meanwhile is a little faith. If you want to condemn me after Thursday, okay. I'm sure you won't."

Applause broke out, and there were cries of "You tell 'em, Joe" and "Why don't you slug that guy Head in the teeth?"

Joe held up his hand and was surprised to find it steady. "Meanwhile," he said, "you guys have got a job on your hands. As of this morning, we're three games behind the Yankees. To catch 'em we've gotta keep on playing ball to win. Don't let this thing affect you. Just keep on playing like the finest team in the world — which you are. And now, so long."

He left the room to an ovation. But he was only a few steps down the corridor when he began to shake all over. Mr. van Buren was behind him. "Joe," he said, "wait a minute. Where you going?"

"I don't know. The airport, I guess."

"Look, I'll call you as soon as we get back in town," van Buren said. He held out his hand. "We believe in you, boy. Just remember that. The team believes in you."

A FEW MINUTES before take-off time that afternoon, Joe was staring forlornly out the window when someone dropped heavily into the seat beside him. Joe turned. "Well, if it's not good old slippery Applegate," he said.

"I knew you'd want me near in this moment of crisis," Applegate said, fastening his seat belt, "so I came as soon as I could."

"That was reliable of you," Joe said. "This would never have happened if you hadn't tried to proposition Ent that night."

"Listen, lad, we're in this together and instead of squabbling about whose fault it is let's use our mental energy to better purpose. Do you have any ideas?"

"Yeah. Quit the team and hide somewhere until September twenty-first comes and you change me back. Nuts to the whole mess."

"Joe. Joe. Have you stopped to figure out what that would mean?"

"At this point I don't care what it would mean."

"Let's take its effect on the team first. If you quit and disappear, it's the same thing as admitting guilt. So, every game the team's won will go into the lost column. They drop down to the cellar, right? The Yankees win the pennant, right? Mr. van Buren and Mr. Welch and all the others, they're publicly humiliated, right?"

He broke off, and not until the plane was in the air did he resume, first sighing heavily and saying, "It's the take-offs and landings that get me. . . . Well, to continue — Old Man Welch dies with a bitter memory in his heart and his team in the cellar. In fact I wouldn't be surprised if it killed him on the spot. Don't you have any sensibilities left?"

"You can't expect everybody to be as sensitive as you are, Applegate."

"Look, Joe," Applegate said, unperturbed, "no matter what else happens — no matter whether you decide you want to go on being Joe Hardy the rest of your life or return to Joe Boyd — I think you owe it to all concerned to show up at that hearing and defend yourself. . . ."

"You seem to forget that I'm not nearly so worried about the hearing as I am about what happens to me after the hearing."

"You mean you're still set on switching back to Joe Boyd again, is that it?"

"Yeah, that's it."

"I never thought I'd see the day," Applegate said, shaking his head. "Look. Stay Joe Hardy, and what happens? You're a heroic baseball player for years to come. The team rides high for years to come. You spend your winters in vacation spots. Lola's happy. Van Buren's happy. Maybe Old Man Welch's life gets prolonged.

Head gets his comeuppance. I'm happy. Everybody's happy."

"How about my wife?"

"Stop speaking of her as your wife, will you?" Applegate demanded. "She's not your wife now, and hasn't been for weeks . . . a-a-a-h, here we are. Thank you, madam."

As the stewardess set their suppers before them, he said, "It looks very tasty, very tasty indeed. You know," he went on in a confidential tone, "I don't see how these airlines manage so well with food. Look at that. Steak. In mid-air."

"I never saw anybody think about his stomach as much as you do," Joe said.

"A man's got to eat," Applegate said, sipping his tomato juice. "Now look, Joe, let's talk about the hearing. Let's see, it's the twenty-first, isn't it? The same day your contract expires."

"Which in itself seems quite a coincidence."

"Yes, it does for a fact," Applegate said.

"I'm going to ask the Commissioner to move the date up," Joe said.

"No, don't do that, Joe. In the first place, I'll need all that time to get my case in order. I'm going to be your lawyer, of course."

"You!"

"Certainly me. Who else?"

"The club lawyer."

"Don't be silly, Joe. I'm the man to defend you. Not some stupid, fumbling idiot of a club lawyer."

"I'm still going to have the hearing moved up."

"No, Joe, I need the time, and furthermore it really doesn't make so much difference that they both fall on the same day. I mean, I wouldn't switch you back until night falls anyway, because that's when I do all that sort of thing. Now look, lad, as soon as I finish eating, I'm going to pull out. I've got to get away to some quiet place and get the old bean to working. . . . "

"How about Ent? If you show up at the hearing, he'll recognize you."

"Leave Ent to me. Now first of all, I don't think you should go back to your own house — Boyd's house, that is — before the hearing. I mean, after all . . . the stuff in the papers and so forth."

"Okay," Joe said wearily. "What else can I say but okay? You're running it."

"Right. Just lie low in the hotel. And you'll be at the hearing bright and early on the twenty-first. You know, I'm kinda looking forward to this thing. I have my advocates, of course, but it's not often the old man gets a chance to plead a case personally."

He turned and walked down the aisle and Joe saw him no more that day.

CHAPTER 10

"AND SO, Mr. Commissioner," Luster Head said, "since it appears my principal witness in this case has been delayed, I move the hearing be held over until tomorrow afternoon."

"Mr. Commissioner," Applegate said, rising and walking toward the dais where the Commissioner sat, flanked by the president of each league, "I submit that such a delay would be unconscionable. My client, Mr. Hardy, has undergone untold mental anguish for the better part of a week now. He stands ready to defend himself. The hearing was set for September twenty-first, sir, and I submit that even another twenty-four hours of anxiety for my client would be unnecessary and extreme cruelty."

He paused. The crowd stirred. Joe examined the backs of his hands, then looked up at Mr. Welch and Mr. van Buren, seated side by side in the front row. Mr. van Buren raised a clenched fist, a gesture of encouragement, and Mr. Welch followed suit.

"And Mr. Commissioner, furthermore," Applegate continued, "I should like to call to the Commissioner's attention the fact that this hearing has now been going on since the hour of three, and that so far Mr. Head has declined even to state the specific nature of his accusation. He has resorted only to the very vague contention that Mr. Hardy has been guilty of conduct harmful to organized baseball, and even for this charge he has adduced absolutely no evidence beyond a statement from the Recorder of Deeds in the town of Hannibal, Missouri, and a few letters from residents of that city, purporting to show that Mr. Hardy was never born there. Beyond this, Mr. Head has confined his

case, if case it may be called, to a continued harping on the thesis that baseball is and has always been a clean game.

"Now, Mr. Commissioner, the defense does not dispute that baseball is and should remain a clean game. But I submit that re-emphasizing the cleanliness of baseball is not the purpose of this hearing. The purpose is to examine the nature of Mr. Head's accusation and to hear his supporting evidence. And since, in over three hours' time, Mr. Head has done little but shilly-shally, I respectfully move, Mr. Commissioner, that the case be dismissed and my client summarily cleared."

Amid great applause, Applegate walked gravely back to the table and sat down.

The Commissioner, after a moment of consultation, intoned: "Mr. Head's motion for postponement is denied. Mr. Applegate's motion for dismissal is also denied."

"In that case, Mr. Commissioner," Applegate said, "may I suggest in view of the hour that proceedings be recessed for a supper period of reasonable duration."

"Good idea, Mr. Applegate." The Commissioner consulted his watch again and the league presidents did likewise. "It is now a quarter to seven. The hearing stands recessed until eight thirty." The Commissioner sounded his gavel and rose.

"Well . . ." Applegate assembled a sheaf of papers as the buzzing audience began to move out. "You can't say I'm not doing my best for you, lad. Shall we get something to eat?"

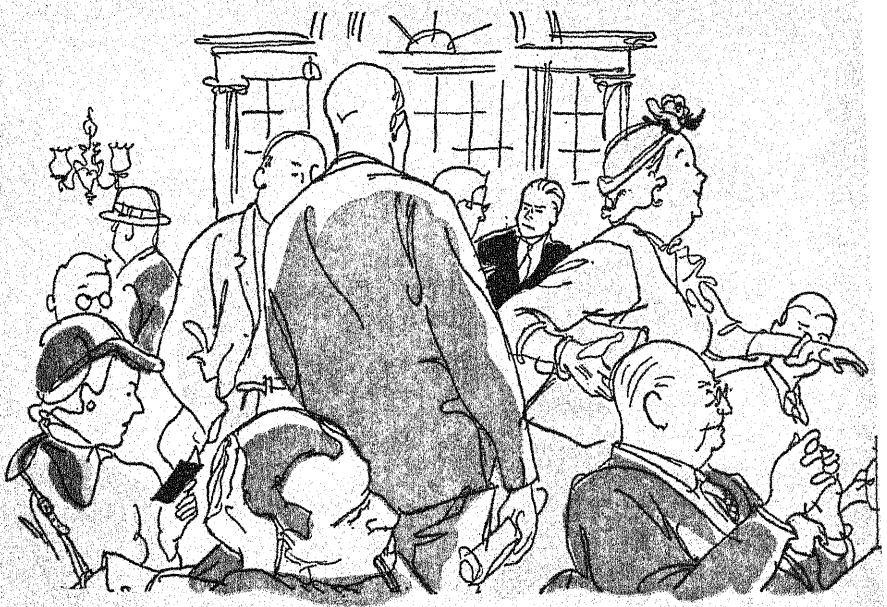
"Mr. Hardy . . ." The familiar voice; the very familiar voice. Then he saw her, pushing her way through the crowd, wearing the blue dress she sometimes wore to church, and a new blue hat with a rose on it.

"Mr. Hardy, I just wanted you to know that I'm rooting for you, and so are the other girls."

She reached his side, laying a hand on his arm, but he could not meet her eyes.

"I won't keep you," she said, "but I did want you to know we are with you. And the very best of luck, Mr. Hardy."

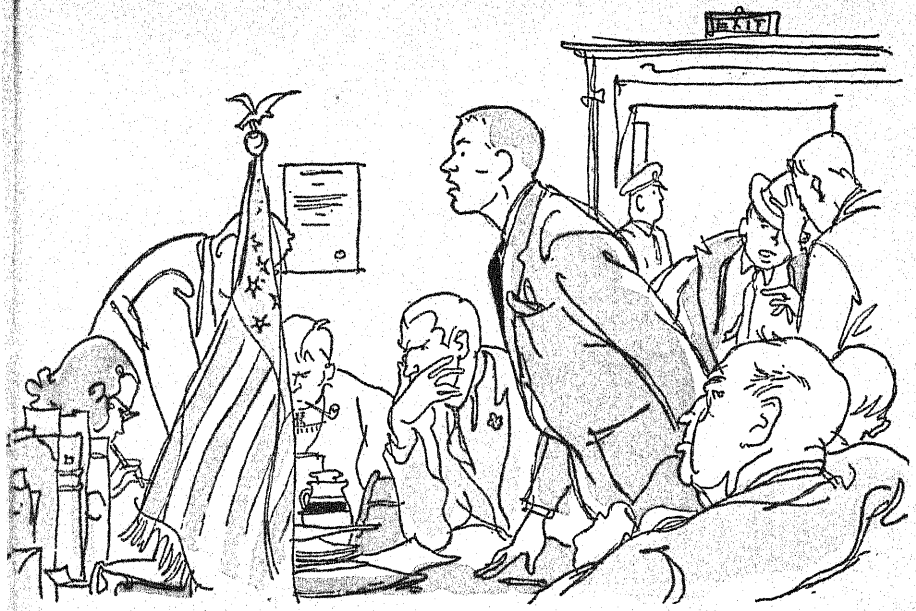
She moved away then, and Joe followed her with his eyes until she had disappeared into the crowd.



"That's a very attractive landlady you have, Joe," Applegate said, the corner of his mouth twitching in amusement. "Well, shall we eat?"

AFTER the hearing had been resumed and there was still no sign of Head's witness, Applegate strode once more toward the dais. "Mr. Commissioner," he said, "as I believe I indicated once before, the defense feels it is working somewhat in the dark here. At this point, some five hours after the hearing began, we still have nothing more concrete to chew on than Mr. Head's so-called evidence on the subject of Hannibal, Missouri. Now, Mr. Commissioner, first and foremost, I submit that it is no crime not to have been born and raised in Hannibal, Missouri." Applegate chuckled. "Many people were not born and raised in Hannibal, Missouri, I among them. And you, I daresay, Mr. Commissioner."

Applegate paused and winked surreptitiously at Joe, who grimaced with disgust.



"Be that as it may," Applegate continued, "the evidence concerning Hannibal is all we have before us, and so the defense will now turn its attention to that—with the simple intent of showing you gentlemen the length to which Mr. Head's desperation has driven him. . . . I should like to call to the stand Mr. Paul Wilkerson."

Surprised, Joe glanced to a spot halfway back in the audience, where a gray-haired man in a white suit rose and made his way to the witness stand.

"Now, Mr. Wilkerson," Applegate began, "where is your home?"

"Just outside of Hannibal, Missouri," the witness replied. "About four tenths of a mile past the city limits."

"And how long have you resided there, sir?"

"Thirty-five years."

"All right, sir. Now, seated over there at the defense table is a young man with sandy hair. Do you know that young man?"

"Sure. That's Joe Hardy."

"And how long have you known Mr. Hardy?"

"Ever since he was a baby."

"And was Mr. Hardy, to your certain knowledge, born and raised in the city of Hannibal?"

"Oh, sure. Born and raised."

Luster Head was staring, his pipe hanging in his fingers.

"And, Mr. Wilkerson, did you ever know Mr. Hardy to play baseball in or around Hannibal?"

"Oh, sure. He always liked baseball."

"How would you describe Mr. Hardy as a baseball player? Do you know enough of the game to tell us whether he was talented?"

"Talented? I'll say he was talented. He could always hit 'em a mile, even when he was a young kid."

"All right, Mr. Wilkerson. Thank you very much."

There was stamping of feet among some members of the audience, as well as shrill whistling and loud cheering. Applegate stood triumphantly, one hand in the side pocket of his jacket, the other resting easily on the arm of the witness chair.

"I should now like to call to the stand Mr. Rodney Birdsell," he said.

"Just a second." Luster Head, face flushed, strode toward the dais. "Mr. Commissioner, I should like the opportunity to cross-examine Mr. Wilkerson."

Applegate shrugged. "Your witness," he said.

"Granted, Mr. Head," the Commissioner said.

"Now, Mr. Wilkerson," Head began, "what evidence can you give to support your belief that Mr. Hardy was born in Hannibal?"

"Evidence?" Mr. Wilkerson sniffed contemptuously. "I don't need evidence. I just know it, that's all. The night he was born, didn't I sit up all night with his father, right in the next room? He wasn't born until six o'clock in the morning."

"His father?"

"Sure, his father. Old Bob Hardy was his father. One of the best friends I had in the world. When he died I cried like a baby."

"Mr. Wilkerson," Head said, "what evidence can you give us that you are in fact a resident of Hannibal, Missouri?"

"I can show you the house I live in if you want to go out there and see it." As the audience laughed, Mr. Wilkerson smiled in self-appreciation. "Or I can give you my telephone number and you can call up my wife if you want to. She's sitting home right now."

Head looked steadfastly at the witness, seemed about to speak, then turned away. "That's all, Mr. Commissioner," he said grimly.

"And now," Applegate said, "again I should like to call Mr. Rodney Birdsell."

After Mr. Birdsell there were five more, two housewives and three farmers, all of Hannibal. All told of knowing Joe Hardy from childhood; all testified to his natural talent as a ballplayer.

As for Joe, what was at first surprise and grudging admiration passed quickly into anxiety as the clock moved on, as the interminable questions and answers continued. By the time the last witness left the stand it was nearing eleven.

Applegate again moved for dismissal. Joe studied the Commissioner's face, noted with hope that it looked tired as he conferred once more with the two league presidents.

At last the Commissioner sounded his gavel. When quiet was restored, he said, "Now, Mr. Head, it is the opinion of the hearing body that you have been given ample opportunity to produce—where *is* Mr. Head?"

Joe slumped back. Applegate craned his neck. Head was missing.

"Mr. Head was called to the telephone, sir," somebody at the prosecution table said.

The Commissioner set down his gavel and shrugged wearily, then glanced up as Head hurried into the room, his face bright with hope. "Mr. Commissioner, I have just had a telephone call from my witness. He is on the outskirts of the city and will be here within twenty minutes."

Joe groaned. The Commissioner toyed with his gavel. "Well, all right, Mr. Head," he said finally. "We've waited this long. I suppose we can wait another twenty minutes. Where has your witness been?"

"His bus broke down soon after they left Pocomoke."

"Very well, Mr. Head. However, it is the feeling of this hearing body that if your witness should not be here in, let us say, thirty minutes—"

"I'm sure he'll be here by that time," Head said.

"Very well. We'll give him until a quarter of twelve. And now while waiting we will have a short recess. We will reconvene at eleven thirty."

"Come on out in the hall with me a minute," Joe muttered to Applegate.

"Now," Joe said when they were outside. "At ten minutes of twelve, we're leaving. I don't care who's on the stand or whether the Commissioner is standing on his head. We're leaving. Is that understood?"

"Sure." Applegate sighed. "I haven't been through a day like this in a long time. Frankly, I think if Roscoe gets here as late as ten of and finishes by, say, five of, we can still swing it easily."

"No, that's cutting it too thin," Joe said.

"You're the doctor, but it doesn't take a second," Applegate said. "Even if we got outside by two minutes of, I could say the word and all of a sudden you'd be old Joe Boyd, heading for the elevator." He dragged speculatively on a cigarette. "Joe, did you ever stop to think, though . . . I mean, you're cleared, and then the next minute you disappear. How's that going to look from the Commissioner's viewpoint? And the fans'?"

"For that matter," Joe said, "how about all those phony witnesses? What's going to happen when people out in Hannibal—"

"They're not phony, Joe. It's true that if there was ever a vote on whether Joe Hardy once lived in Hannibal there'd be a rather sharp division of opinion among the townspeople but . . . we'd have our supporters, boy, we'd have our supporters."

Joe shook his head in amazement, tinged with disgust. "And what's this stuff about Ent? What's he doing in Pocomoke?"

"It's news to me," Applegate said.

"And what are you going to do when he recognizes you?"

"Just try to bluff it through, I suppose," Applegate said. "Well, shall we go back in now?"

And as they headed down the hall again, he said in a low voice, "Joe, it breaks my heart to think that in another fifteen minutes or so we'll be saying good-bye."

"I can't say it breaks my heart."

"I refuse to take that personally," Applegate said.

PROMPTLY at eleven thirty, the Commissioner and presidents resumed their seats. The hearing room grew still.

"We shall now wait," the Commissioner said.

Luster Head lit and relit his pipe, glanced at his watch, began to fidget. At twenty-five minutes of twelve, he rose. "Mr. Commissioner. While we are waiting for my witness I should like to say a few words of preamble to his testimony."

"Very well, Mr. Head. Proceed."

Head walked slowly to the dais. "Initially, sir," he said, "I should like to make a few remarks about, shall we say, the limits of athletic ability. Now, Mr. Commissioner, as we all know, Babe Ruth set an all-time record for home runs with sixty during the season of 1927. Likewise we know that very rarely in the history of baseball has a player compiled a season batting average of over four hundred. It's been done, of course, but rarely."

Head gestured toward Joe with his pipe. "Yet, Mr. Commissioner, here is a man who has hit forty-eight home runs. Not in a full season, but in less than two months. That same man has compiled a batting average of five-forty-five to date. That same man makes phenomenal catches in the outfield. Now, Mr. Commissioner, does it not seem strange that a man of such incredible skill should have arrived in the major leagues from nowhere—without previous experience in organized baseball, with a past history that is at best vague? Does it not seem peculiar that such a fantastic man should have been all but totally unknown to the world before he suddenly appeared in the outfield of the Washington Senators? Why is the past of this inhumanly perfect ballplayer so mysterious? Who, really, is Joe Hardy?"

Dramatically now, Head lowered his voice. "Ladies and gentlemen . . . Mr. Commissioner . . . Messrs. the Presidents, I myself cannot answer that question. I have a theory . . . I have a strong

suspicion . . . but I would prefer that you hear from the lips of my witness the story that he told me . . . a story profoundly frightening . . . deeply shocking . . . a story—"

The door swung open and in walked Roscoe Ent, followed closely by a slim dark girl with a lithe way of walking.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Head said, "my witness—Mr. Roscoe *Ent.*"

It was a Roscoe new to Joe. A Roscoe dressed with extreme conservatism in a brown business suit, although, Joe noted, there was nothing conservative about the cut of the black dress worn by the girl with him.

By Joe's watch, it was exactly twelve minutes of twelve as Head motioned Roscoe to the witness stand. "Now, Mr. Ent," he said, face confident, "first, will you identify yourself?"

"I am Roscoe Ent of Pocomoke, Maryland," Ent said, fixing his eyes on the girl.

"Were you formerly employed by the Washington ball club?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well," Head said, rubbing his hands. "Now, Mr. Ent, is that young man at the defense table known to you?"

"Yes, sir. That's Joe Hardy."

"Very well. Now, Mr. Ent, will you tell the hearing about a recent incident in Baltimore involving Mr. Hardy?"

"Well, I was doing an act in a night club when Joe came over to see me and apologize because I'd lost my job."

"Yes. Proceed."

Ent smiled and spread his hands. "That's about all."

Head slowly removed the pipe from his mouth. "What!" he bellowed. "What do you mean that's all, Mr. Ent? How about the man you saw?"

"Oh, that." Ent smiled again. "Yes, there was a man. Joe and I had left the night club when this guy comes up to me and he says, 'Hey, buddy, haven't I seen you someplace before?' And I says to him, 'I don't know, have you?' And he says, 'Yeah, wasn't you out with my sister last night?' And I says, 'I didn't know you even had a sister,' and he says, 'I haven't.' Then he nodded and walked off."

From the audience there was an outburst of laughter such as Roscoe had never received at The Dirty Room.

"Mr. Ent," Head demanded in a choked voice, "what are you talking about? That is *not* the story you told me ten days ago."

"Sure," Roscoe said, unruffled. "It's the same. Oh, maybe not word for word, but just about the same."

Head dropped into a chair at the prosecution table and let his head fall slowly over against his clenched hands.

"It's ten of, Joe," Applegate said. "Shall we go?"

"Okay," Joe whispered. And, he thought, although the risk had been great, although he had shaved it thin, and although Ent's testimony was inexplicably fantastic, it had all worked out. He had saved the team, saved its victories intact, saved its chance for the pennant, saved it from shame, and there were still eight minutes. As he headed for the exit, he realized with a tiny twinge of regret and nostalgia that in another few seconds he would be saying good-bye forever to the person of Joe Hardy.

"Just a minute," the Commissioner shouted. "Where does the defense think it is going?"

Joe and Applegate turned.

"We assumed, sir," Applegate said, "that the testimony of Mr. Ent would end the matter. There is obviously no substance to Mr. Head's case."

"Be that as it may," the Commissioner said, "the hearing is still in progress. Now, Mr. Head, you mentioned earlier that you had a theory. Do you care to propound that theory?"

Face sullen, Head hesitated and then said, "No, sir. I realize that I am laughingstock enough already. I do not propose to make myself more so."

"Very well then, Mr. Hardy . . ."

"However, Mr. Commissioner . . ." Head was on his feet. "I do have one request to make. I should like to have Mr. Hardy examined by a physician."

The audience broke into laughter.

"You would what?" the Commissioner said.

"I have a very good reason for making that request," Head said. "It has to do with certain physical characteristics. . . ."

The Commissioner shrugged. "Is there a doctor in the audience?" he said.

Four rose, and the Commissioner smiled and said, "It is pleasing to see that so many of the medical profession have an interest in our national pastime. . . . Now, Mr. Hardy, I have no idea what Mr. Head is driving at by this unseemly request, but do you have any objection? Are you willing to submit to an examination?"

Joe stared into the audience, his heart pounding. Bess was smiling at him. It was four minutes of twelve.

"May I consult with Mr. Applegate a second, sir?"

"Mr. Hardy," the Commissioner said, "do you have misgivings about such an examination?"

"None whatsoever. I'd just like to talk to him."

"Very well."

Joe turned to his counsel.

"It's a tough decision to make, lad," Applegate muttered. "But it has to be your decision, not mine. It's three minutes of twelve. I'm ready to do whatever you say. I'll abide by the contract."

It has been said, Joe knew, that men near death review their lives in a matter of seconds. His knuckles were white as he grasped the edge of the table.

"But it's going to take at least ten minutes to go through all this physical-examination stuff, that's certain," Applegate said. "Can you give me an extension?"

"Sorry, Joe. I really can't. A contract's a contract, lad."

"That guy Head . . . where'd he ever get an idea like that?"

"Maybe he wants to see if you have a tail," Applegate said solemnly.

"Mr. Hardy, have you made your decision?" the Commissioner called. "I'd like to get this hearing over with sometime before the baseball season ends."

"Of course, I could switch you back to Joe Boyd and then you could take the examination," Applegate said, "but then you'd certainly differ in quite a few respects from Joe Hardy."

Or he could flee. Now. And that would be admitting guilt. He had gotten himself into this mess, and dragged the team in with him. He could desert them now. But for the rest of his life he

would have to live with his own cowardice, his own selfishness. And if he did the right thing by the team it meant he would lose his chance; forevermore he would be damned to Applegate. His head began to swim and he felt the room begin to reel.

"Mr. Hardy . . ."

Joe took a deep breath, looked once at Bess, and then at the Commissioner.

"All right, sir. I'm ready for the examination."

TEN MINUTES LATER, Joe and the four doctors stood before the Commissioner.

"Have you gentlemen completed your findings?" the Commissioner said.

"Yes, sir," one of the four said. "We find Mr. Hardy completely normal in all respects."

A great cheer rang through the hearing room, and the Commissioner banged his gavel angrily. "The hearing is still in progress," he shouted. "Mr. Head," he went on menacingly, "would you step up here, please."

Head slunk toward the dais.

"Now, Mr. Head, it should seem clear even to you by now that you have wasted the time of this hearing body, and that furthermore you have cast a completely unwarranted slur on the name of a lad who has been a credit to baseball. All this we know. What I should like to know, Mr. Head, is on what conceivable evidence you instigated this charge?"

Head raised his eyes in appeal. "I was sitting at my desk one day, sir," he said, "when I got a telephone call from somebody who wouldn't give me his name. He told me Joe Hardy was a big phony and that to prove it all I had to do was ask a few questions around Hannibal, Missouri. . . . That's how it started."

"And who was this informant?" the Commissioner said.

"I have no idea, sir, because he wouldn't give his name. I remember he had a very hoarse, deep voice, and he kept calling me 'lad.'"

Joe looked quickly at Applegate, who examined his nails intently, then looked toward the ceiling. Suddenly, fifteen minutes too late, Joe knew. It had been Applegate all the way.

And Applegate was saying, "Mr. Commissioner, I ask for the decision of the hearing body."

Striking the gavel twice, the Commissioner stood and said, "The hearing body finds unanimously that Joe Hardy is—*innocent*. He may rejoin the team tomorrow."

Joe was immediately surrounded by the audience, milling and shoving and cheering, all trying to reach his hand. And Applegate was making a speech.

"Mr. Commissioner," he said, "the defense wishes to assure Mr. Head that, although his movements have been ill-considered throughout, we hold no grudge. Because Mr. Head was motivated, as are we all, by the desire to keep baseball what it has ever been and must ever remain—the cleanest game in the land."

Hearing the insidious tone, struck by the diabolical glint of Applegate's eyes, Joe felt sudden fear and, breaking free from the crowd, he fled. Out the door, down the corridor, by-passing the elevator, seeking the stairway, down one flight, and then down another, with no clear idea but to escape.

Flight after flight he descended until there, waiting at the next landing, was Applegate. Smiling.

"Where are you going in such a hurry, lad?" he said. "Don't dash off, we've got business."

CHAPTER 11

IT WAS after 3 a.m. and they were sitting in the rear booth of an all-night eating place. Applegate was hunched low over a mound of chopped chicken livers; Joe was slumped against the wall, on his plate a half-eaten cheeseburger.

Joe gazed miserably at Applegate's face, noted its utter lack of concern, its complete absorption in the food he was shoveling in with such *élan*. Dabbing his mouth with his napkin, Applegate looked up, smiled faintly. "Don't take it so hard, Joe," he said. "Everything's going to be all right. You'll see. Maybe if I tell you about Roscoe Ent it'll cheer you up a little. Would you like to hear?"

"No," Joe said.

"No what?"

Joe gritted his teeth. "No, sir," he muttered.

Applegate smiled, relenting. "I'm not really going to insist on that, Joe," he said. "As time goes by and you feel you'd like to call me sir voluntarily, then I think it would be a very nice gesture on your part."

"You engineered it all, right down to the last rotten detail," Joe said. "You called up Head about Hannibal. You—"

"I'll confess it was all rather clever," Applegate said. "I must also confess that it's been a highly entertaining summer."

"You're a crumb," Joe said.

Applegate chuckled. "It's a good thing I'm feeling mellow tonight. . . . Joe, I want to talk briefly with you about your future and I've got some very interesting pictures to show you, but first I want to tell you about Ent. It's vain of me, I suppose, but . . ."

"You hooked him after all, I see," Joe said.

"No, as a matter of fact I haven't," Applegate said. "Not that I didn't try. . . . Well, anyway, it seems he went into the sausage factory after all. For years he tried to buck it, first with burlesque, then with baseball, and the night clubs and so on. But after his act flopped that night in Baltimore, he went back home and reported for work at the factory. He says he realizes it's what he was always meant to do and he seems very happy, especially since he got married."

"Come on, Applegate."

"I'm dead serious. Three days ago he got married, to that little lady he came with tonight. She's a night-club stripper."

"How'd he ever get her to marry him?"

"Well . . ." Applegate snickered.

"You said you didn't hook him."

"I didn't. However, he was willing to do me a favor in return for the love of this girl we saw tonight and so . . . yes, Joe, you might say I got to the witness. . . . Now, take a look at this."

From a manila envelope, he produced a photograph and handed it across the table. It showed a young man skiing, bronzed face sharp against a frosty sky. Without even a sense of shock, Joe recognized the face as his own.

"That'll be this winter in the French Alps," Applegate said. "Now here's another one."

The second photograph showed himself and Lola standing before a neat stone cottage. Joe was wearing a beret.

"And that, of course, is you and Lola in Provence this autumn," Applegate said. "That's the house you'll have. Oh, by the way, did I ever tell you about Lola?"

"What about her?"

"Well, quite a while ago I kind of half promised you to her after the twenty-first."

"Yes, I've already heard."

"I think you'll find her very companionable," Applegate said. "The reason I picked out Lola was because she seems your type somehow. She's rather a softhearted girl. Too softhearted, really. I've had quite a bit of trouble with her in the past, but she's getting better. It all takes time."

"What's this one?" Joe asked, picking up another photograph.

"Hey, wait a minute," Applegate said agitatedly, grabbing for it. "That's not supposed to be in there."

But Joe moved it beyond Applegate's reach, and his anger swiftly mounted as he realized the photograph's meaning. It showed him wearing the uniform of the New York Yankees.

"What's the idea, Applegate?" he said.

"I didn't mean for you to see that," Applegate said, "but as long as you've seen it there's nothing I can do about it. You shouldn't be so grabby."

"This had better not mean what I think it means, buster, that's all I can say," Joe said, looking Applegate full in the eye.

"I'm afraid that's precisely what it does mean, Joe," Applegate said cheerfully. "During the winter you'll be traded to the Yankees. You're just too good a ballplayer not to be playing for them."

Joe did not reply. He saw now that the picture caption read, "Joe Hardy, of the World's Champion New York Yankees."

"World's Champion New York Yankees!" he exploded. "How are the Yankees gonna be any world's champions? The Senators are going to win the pennant."

Applegate smiled apologetically, looking down at his plate.

"Joe, I guess I might as well tell you the worst and get it over with. The Senators aren't going to win the pennant at all."

Refusing now to meet Joe's eye, Applegate went on, "You see, Joe, I've been a Yankee fan for years and I couldn't let them down. I just wanted to have some fun. You see the point, don't you?"

"Why, you dirty . . ."

"Now, what's going to happen is this," Applegate went on, unperturbed. "We might as well give the fans their money's worth. You guys are going to pick up whatever ground you still need, and going into the last day of the season you and the Yankees will be tied. Clever, eh? Now, according to the schedule, you guys play the Yankees that day. Well, that'll be a climactic game, all right. It ought to be something to see."

Joe rose abruptly. "Yeah, come out and see it, Applegate. Do me a favor. Come out and see it — and you'll see the Yankees get their noses rubbed in the dirt!"

But as he walked out the door, he knew his words were empty, knew that back in the booth Applegate was chuckling over his chicken livers.

CHAPTER 12

"JOE, DARLING, I'm so sorry you can't be a little happier about it," Lola said. "But what am I to do? Mr. Applegate said it would be okay, and I've been waiting *so* long."

It was a week later, the eve of the final game of the season, and he and Lola were sitting on the sofa in her apartment. On Joe's left hung a large oil painting, a softer-textured replica of the photograph of himself and Lola standing before the little house in Provence.

"It's not your fault, Lola," he said gloomily. "And as far as that goes, if it has to be somebody, I'd far rather it would be you."

She took his hand. "I'm glad to know that, anyway, Joe. In other words, it's not me you find unattractive but the principle of the thing."

He nodded miserably.

"I understand," she said. "You poor darling." Sympathetically

she began patting his hand, but he noticed that she glanced up toward the gray door with the glass knob; the gray door at which Joe himself had been staring uneasily ever since his arrival.

She slid lower on the couch and he glanced at her, then looked quickly away, feeling the old disquietude. For the occasion she wore a tight-fitting bodice of semi-low cut and over it a bolero jacket, all in pink linen. All through the summer, Joe thought, it had been only Lola who had the power to make him waver. Never Applegate. Never the team. Just Lola.

"Joe," she said, "do you want to know something foolish? I'm already packed. Even though we don't leave for another ten days, I'm all ready to sail. Isn't that childish?"

When he did not reply, she said, "Oh, darling, it really *is* going to be such fun. Provence is such a gorgeous place. I know that once you get there you'll love it. . . . Listen, darling, I think you'd feel better if you'd let me fix you a drink."

"No, thanks."

She sighed. "I've tried, Joe. You can't say I haven't tried to make it easy for you."

"I realize that," Joe said. "Let me think for a while."

"Take as long as you like, Joe," she said.

A HALF HOUR passed in silence. Joe slumped lower on the couch, at times closing his eyes, then opening them, to be confronted with the slimness of Lola's ankle and, beyond, the gray door. From somewhere in another part of the house there was the sound of hammering. For Lola's quarters were not an apartment in the ordinary sense. They were two rooms, living room and bedroom, on the third floor of an old house.

When he opened his eyes again, she was looking full at him, and he noticed again how soft were her lashes, how devastatingly beautiful her face. He reached out a hand, moved it slowly up the back of her neck. Then he rose, walked across the room to the gray door and turned. "Okay, Lola," he said.

She did not rise. She merely continued to look at him for a long moment. "Come here, Joe," she said. "Come sit down again for a second."



Slowly he recrossed the room and sat down. For perhaps a full minute she gazed pensively at the oil painting, at times seeming about to smile, at others to cry.

"Lola, what is it?" he asked finally.

"You're a wonderful guy, Joe," she said, "but I can't make you do it. Something inside just won't let me. While you had your eyes closed, I was watching your face, and for the first time it came to me how truly miserable you are. The one thing I ask is that you leave, right now. The longer you stay, the more painful it is for me. . . ."

She bit her lip and her eyes filled with tears.

"I'm sorry, Lola," he said, rising, touching her head.

"Don't touch me, Joe, please. That only makes it worse." Her voice breaking now, she said, "I only wish you had won instead of Mr. Applegate. I wish you had stopped being Joe Hardy on September twenty-first. . . ." Burying her face on the arm of the sofa, she began weeping uncontrollably.

"That's what I want more than anything else in the world, Lola," he said gently. "Can you help me stop being Joe Hardy?"

"It's impossible," she said, her voice muffled. "Even if it were possible, it would mean such a horrible punishment for me that I couldn't begin to describe it." Again the racking sobs began.

"All right, Lola," he said. "I'll be going now. And thanks."

"Yes, please, Joe. Please go now."

And rising, she ran swiftly across to the gray door and yanked it open. He caught a glimpse of her tear-stained face, and then she threw herself face down on her bed.

The thing about all this, he thought, as he walked down the stairs, is that nothing gets better. Always and always worse.

CHAPTER 13

SEPTEMBER 29, 1958, was a bright crisp day in the nation's capital. The wind had shifted during the night, and all over the city the flags were standing out to the southeast against a deep blue sky.

As he rode to the Stadium in a cab, Joe looked out at the people streaming along the streets. He winced with guilt. On the lips of

these people, and those like them all over the city, there could be no conceivable topic but the game; in their hearts nothing less than confidence of victory. For why else would a team be lifted from the abyss and led so far if not intended for victory? Anything less would be cruelly incomprehensible. And it was he, Joe Hardy, the greedy and the gullible, who had led them within sight of the vision and who must stand helplessly by now while the vision was snatched away.

As he dressed for the game, he was surrounded by guys alive with excitement, guys exchanging determined promises, guys with whom he would not be playing after today.

After today . . .

Hearing them was pain. And there was pain in watching Benny van Buren's attempt to maintain a crusty, taciturn air, when it was apparent that inside he was fluttering. The manager cleared his throat to speak. Standing near him was Mr. Welch, bundled in his heavy overcoat, his eyes shining.

"Fellows," Mr. van Buren was saying, "first of all I wanna announce that it'll be Ransom going for us today, and we couldn't put the ball in better hands. . . ."

Sammy Ransom. Sammy, who would be pitching with only two days' rest . . . who, in the late innings, would lose the snap from his fireball and then would try to get by on heart alone . . . Sammy, who had no way of knowing that heart stood for nothing with a rat named Applegate.

"And I also wanna say this," Mr. van Buren continued. "I hope we win today. I'm expecting to win. But whether we win or lose, I want to tell you guys that you've played the greatest baseball I've ever seen in my life. . . ."

And when Mr. van Buren concluded, up jumped Rocky Pratt, a regenerated character by now, a man of team spirit, a man who never complained of headaches from excessive TV viewing. "Listen, Ben," he shouted, "all that stuff sounds fine, but there's just one thing wrong with it. We're not gonna lose. We're gonna win. Hey, you guys, who's thinking about losing?"

"Nobody!" was the answering chorus.

"Then let's go out there and *win!*" Pratt thundered.

AN OVATION rocked the park as the team took the field. Trotting out to his right-field post, Joe saw that Applegate and Lola were not in their usual seats. Was Applegate so confident of the outcome that he disdained even to be a witness?

The plate umpire signaled to play ball. Ransom peered in for his signal, wound up, let fire, and thus began a game that would live forever in the minds of men.

Pitching for the Yankees that day was Bix Kilgallen, a right-hander who already had twenty-three victories to his credit and who, like Ransom, was a fireballer. But Kilgallen was not right that day. If Applegate was determined to exact the quintessence in cruelty, he could not be managing it more expertly, Joe thought. Even to the last he was dangling the bait.

For after the Yankees went out in order in the first, Joe came up in the Senators' half and rifled the second pitch on a line to deepest center. With his great speed, he beat the relay for an inside-the-park home run, and the score was 1 to 0. The ball park rocked with sound. The Yankees, although they still conducted themselves with the mien of champions, now looked not so tall in their uniforms, nor so lethal at bat.

And in the fourth, Joe, up again, lashed a towering drive over the scoreboard in right center. Although Joe's two homers were the only hits Kilgallen had yielded, he was yanked then in favor of Buttons Avery, the Yankees' venerable relief artist, famed for his control and his poise in the clutch.

Meanwhile Sammy Ransom, his fast ball kicking like a live thing, was mowing down the champions with the precision of a machine gunner. In the sixth, his control momentarily gone, he walked the first two batters but steadied and came out of the frame unscathed. And Joe, first man up in the seventh, doubled sharply to right center. A bunt and a long fly brought him around, and the score was 3 to 0.

Where was Applegate? He did not appear in the eighth inning, and, as the ninth began, Joe dared to hope.

Only three outs away from victory. Joe leaned forward as Ransom faced the first Yankee batter; Ransom, who had performed so gallantly. Three quick outs . . .

"Joe Hardy stinks out loud."

The rasping voice left no doubt. There sat Applegate in his accustomed place. Lola was not with him.

"You stink, Hardy," he shouted, as he fluttered his handkerchief in Joe's direction.

And then Joe could look no more because the first Yankee lined a ball over his head which he turned and chased to the base of the right-field wall, taking the carom neatly and whipping it into the infield in time to hold the hit to a double.

Joe knew this was it.

The next batter singled sharply to center. The run scored, and it was now 3 to 1.

"How d'ya like that, Hardy?" Applegate was shouting. The partisan crowd was telling him to shut up and sit down but he took no notice. "That's the first one, Hardy," he bellowed. "And you ain't seen nothing yet."

And it was true. In quick succession, the next two Yankee batters pumped singles to left and center, scoring another run and putting men on first and third. It was now 3 to 2, and the gallant Ransom had had it. With slumped shoulders, he stood near the mound while a relief pitcher was called in.

"You're a big fourflusher, Hardy," Applegate was yelling.

The Washington relief man was Bill Gregson, who had saved many a game for the team that summer. Working craftily, he got the first batter he faced on a long fly to left. That was out number one, but it also scored the runner from third, and the score now was tied at 3 to 3, with a Yankee still on first. Shaving the corners too closely, Gregson walked the next man, but the one following went out on a pop-up behind second.

"Okay, Hardy," Applegate yelled. "This is it right here. This is the ball game, old pal."

Not doubting it, Joe leaned forward. The runners led off their bases. Gregson wound up, delivered. Ball one. Then strike one, and then . . .

The hit was a humpback, arching softly over the second baseman's head toward short right field and sinking fast. The Yankee runners were streaking down the base paths. And Joe Hardy was

digging straight ahead, digging for the last notch of speed, diving with outstretched glove, and picking the ball off the grass tops, then falling hard to the ground, rolling over and over, but with his bare hand holding the ball aloft to prove it had been caught, and the roar that surged through the park was as much a roar of amazement as applause.

Picking himself up, Joe glanced at Applegate, who sat glumly back in his seat, and Joe realized that not even Applegate had expected him to catch that ball, realized it had been meant to fall safely, and that other hits would have followed, breaking the game wide open in favor of the Yankees.

And as he trotted back to the bench, doffing his cap to the roar of the crowd, he realized something else. There was an acute pain in his right shoulder where he had hit the ground. And he felt suddenly winded, very tired. He, who had felt neither physical pain nor fatigue since the night of July twenty-first.

The bench was silent, except for Mr. van Buren, who kept muttering over and over, like a man in a trance, "You saved it for us, Joe. That catch saved it for us. Can you win it for us now, Joe?"

Third up, Joe walked slowly over and selected a bat, then stooped at the edge of the dugout and watched while the first batter flied out to left.

One away. He advanced to the on-deck circle. *No, Ben, I don't think I can do it this time.* He looked up at the clear, blue sky beyond the left-field grandstand. *I've done it for you all season, but not this time. There's a guy sitting out there along the right-field line. I'm afraid he's too much for us, Ben.*

Two away.

Joe strode to the plate, and the sound that rose on the afternoon air was an appeal, a concerted plea from thirty thousand fans, who seemed to sense that if the Senators didn't win it here and now with Hardy, the Yankees would wrap it up in the tenth, and second place would be a bitter reality.

Joe stepped in, set his spikes, faced the pitcher.

The ball zipped in. Joe didn't offer. He was reminded of that first day in Detroit when he had faced Rocky Pratt. He had frozen then, and the feeling was the same now.

Strike two, and again he hadn't offered.

You've got no guts. And Applegate wins everything. He's made a monkey of you at every turn. His shoulder ached, and he felt very tired.

The Yankee pitcher curved one wide of the plate, tempting him. And it was now strike two, ball one.

The windup, and it was coming in, letter-high, near the outside corner, and with all his strength Joe swung, saw the ball start out on a line toward deep center field; and he was streaking for first, saw the ball clear the center fielder's head; and he was moving for second and the ball was rolling all the way to the center-field wall, the center fielder in pursuit; and he was digging for third and ahead of him he saw the third-base coach, flailing his arms, signaling him to go all the way.

When it happened it was like a medicine ball, hard in the stomach. Joe faltered; then, clenching his fists, came on again, rounded third and headed for home, but now his temples pounded and his stomach quivered out ahead of him and his breath was coming in short, dry, harsh sobs, and the uniform was too tight, and his legs felt like wood. But he lumbered on down the third-base line, and the figure of the Yankee catcher was like a giant in armor, standing there, blocking the plate. Joe slid, reaching with his toe for a corner of the plate. The ground came up hard to meet him, jolting his whole body, and the ball was jabbed hard against his thigh, like a hammer blow. He heard the umpire yell "Safe!" and then he was rolling over and over, away from the plate, reaching for his cap, jamming it tight over his head, keeping his face to the ground, because he knew that he was now a middle-aged real estate salesman named Joe Boyd.

He saw the Yankee catcher turn with a bellow of rage to confront the umpire; saw the whole Yankee infield and then the outfield and then the men on the bench rush for the umpire; and then the Senators were swarming up from their own bench. Keeping low to the ground, dodging among the shouting players, he reached the now empty dugout and descended the steps leading to the dressing room. At the bottom he paused and, mounting one step, peered cautiously over the coping.



The melee was furious. The Yankee catcher angrily dashed his cap to the ground. Yankee players confronted the umpire chest to chest, and then, running in from right field, came Applegate. Snatching up the catcher's cap from the ground, he jammed it onto his own head and advanced menacingly on the beleaguered plate umpire. Jaw outthrust, he began to bark insults about the umpire's judgment, eyesight, ancestry and sense of direction.

The umpire stood firm, arms akimbo, head held high, face inscrutable. For a few seconds he endured the tirade, then turned his back, but Applegate circled with him, jaw thrust even closer now, banging fist into palm.

Mr. van Buren and Mr. Welch stood aside from the fray, smiling, the manager and the owner of a pennant winner. For the umpire, with a final nervous flick at the plate with his whisk broom, was turning and heading off the field, still nagged by Applegate and the Yankees, but still imperiously adamant.

The victory had been won, and Joe could not resist a glow of



triumph. Applegate, for once, had been foiled. The Senators had copped the pennant. Moreover, the afternoon had proved an axiom long known to baseball men, and known now even to Applegate.

And this was that not even the devil could force an umpire to change his decision.

CHAPTER 14

OE's moment of elation was brief. With no clear idea of what he would do, or where he would go, hoping for the sake of the team to hide his own identity, he grabbed an old raincoat from another player's locker and ran out under the grandstand.

Vaguely thinking that he would find a taxi, and already determined to take without whimpering whatever punishment Applegate might inflict, he headed away from the park. He had gone two blocks when he saw her, running in his direction, carrying a small overnight bag.

"Lola!"

She stopped short, then came ahead, looking at him with bewilderment. "Joe," she said as she reached him. "Poor Joe." She was wearing a black suit, severe in cut. "This is the way you are?"

Crestfallen, he nodded, turning up the lapels of the raincoat, brushing at a wisp of gray hair.

"Joe, did the team win?"

"Yes, they won."

"Oh, I'm so glad. I've been running all the way."

Her dark hair was tousled like a child's. Never had she been so beautiful, never had her voice seemed so warm. And yet, although she smiled, although she said it was nice about the team, there was something frightened about her eyes.

"For once I beat Applegate," Joe said. "Now it's his turn to take it out on me." He patted his stomach ruefully. "In fact, he's already started to take it out on me."

Lola shook her head, smiling.

"Am I that funny-looking?" he said.

"No, you're darling, Joe. . . . Joe . . . you don't have to worry about Applegate taking anything out on you."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You don't want anybody to see you with that uniform on, do you, Joe? Let's go down this little alley here."

She led the way. It was a blind alley, tucked behind a row of stores, and lined with trash cans and boxes.

"What do you mean, Lola?" he repeated.

"I mean you're free, Joe."

For perhaps ten seconds he stared at her, speechless. "But *how?*" he asked finally, incredulously.

"There isn't time to tell you now, Joe. Here." She handed him the overnight bag. "I knew you'd need some clothes."

"But Lola . . ."

"You'd better leave me now, Joe. Go back to your life. Don't stand here any more. Don't look at me. Because it's going to happen any minute."

"What do you mean?" He gazed at her in consternation. "What's going to happen, Lola?"

"I'm — he's going to switch me back," she cried desperately.

"To what you were before?"

"Yes, Joe, only I won't be free. I'll just be — ugly."

He looked at her steadfastly, forgetting that he was no longer Joe Hardy. "But why did you do it, Lola?" he said.

"I guess because I loved a guy named Joe Hardy," she said. "Will you go now, Joe?"

But he could not leave her. His feet were frozen to the cobblestones.

"But how did you do it, Lola?"

"I'll tell you, Joe, if you'll face the other direction; if you'll promise not to look back at me. Because I know it's going to happen any second now."

Reluctantly he turned. "Okay, Lola," he said.

"All right, Joe, now please don't turn around. . . . I played a trick on Mr. Applegate. You know how he feels about food . . . what a repulsive glutton he is. I starved him until he promised to set you free. I stole his shoes, his entire stock of shoes, and I hid them."

"Stole his shoes?"

"Applegate has cloven feet, Joe, just like the books say. He's very sensitive about them. He can't appear in public without his shoes. He has them specially made. So I hid them until he promised to set you free. Only I forgot to insist on any special time. He picked his own time. . . ." Her voice stopped.

"Will you tell me one more thing, Lola? Will you tell me what you were like . . . before?"

She sighed deeply. "I was a schoolteacher, Joe, and I wasn't very pretty. I was fifty years old and an old maid. One day Applegate approached me while I had a class of children going through Mount Vernon. You see, it was really true that I loved Mount Vernon — but we never did get there, did we?"

"No," he said. "No . . . Lola, I feel like I'm going to bust out and cry."

"Don't, Joe. Don't feel bad. Take your freedom. As for me, well —" Her voice broke. "I'll always remember a handsome young man named Joe Hardy. I'll always remember a beautiful

night in a canoe, on a dark river. . . . For the first time in my life I knew what it meant to be in love."

He heard her gasp, and when she spoke again her voice had a different note; it was the same voice, soft and cultured, but it was no longer the voice of a young woman.

"Now it's happened, Joe. . . ."

He sighed. "I don't know what to say, Lola."

"There's nothing else to say, Joe. Just go . . . darling."

"Good-bye, Lola."

Picking up the bag, he walked slowly down the alley. Behind him he heard her begin to sob, but he did not turn. That was the very least he could do for her.

CHAPTER 15

IT WAS LATE at night, and Joe was entering a familiar block in his old neighborhood. Right here, on that night long ago, was where Applegate had stepped from the shadows. Half expectantly, he scanned the block. But there was now no sign of Applegate and, head lowered, he limped on.

"Joe!"

He halted in his tracks.

"Over here, Joe."

Applegate was seated on the coping of a low brick wall. He wore a yellow sports shirt and Panama hat. "Come on, old friend, have a seat," he said. "You must be tired."

"No, thanks. What's on your mind, Applegate?"

"Oh, nothing much," Applegate said casually, and his tone was one Joe had come to recognize as evasive.

"Where's that music coming from?" Joe asked.

"Oh." Applegate reached out along the lawn and patted something. "It's my portable radio. I'm just listening to a little dance music."

"What's on your mind?" Joe repeated, conscious of something ominous about the way Applegate was acting.

"On my mind?" Applegate laughed. "I just dropped around to make sure there were no hard feelings. I also wanted you to know

you're the first guy I've lost on a deal like this since 1601. You looked good out there this afternoon, boy. I guess I ought to congratulate you . . . although you wouldn't have beat me if it hadn't been for Lola."

"And you sure took care of that in a hurry, didn't you? You crumb!" Joe said, suddenly enraged. "You let her have it right in the teeth. That was a real brave thing to do."

"Couldn't be helped, lad," Applegate said quietly. "Like I've told you before, when you're running an organization as big as mine, you've got to enforce some discipline."

Joe sighed heavily and dropped to a seat on the coping, a good distance from Applegate. "What makes you such a heel, anyway?" he said. "I mean, here I've been watching all summer, and in a lot of ways you seem to have some very decent instincts. And yet everything you do is crumby."

Applegate didn't answer immediately. He was picking blades of grass along the edge of the coping. "I don't really know myself, Joe," he said finally. "But I can tell you this much. It's not an easy life. I guess everybody pictures me rampaging around the world on a constant bender, having a wonderful time . . . but it's not that way at all, Joe. You should know that now."

"But why don't you turn over a new leaf or something? What's wrong with you?"

"I honestly don't know, Joe. I had a few sessions with a psychoanalyst a couple of years ago but all he came up with was a few old bromides like power fixation and early rejection. I knew all that stuff myself." Applegate sighed. "My life is very long and sometimes I get tired."

"Did he know who you were?"

"Oh, sure, he was one of us."

"But you can't just—" Joe began and then stopped, for a voice on Applegate's portable radio had said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt this program to bring you a special bulletin from the WDDC newsroom: Joe Hardy has been found. We repeat, Joe Hardy has been found. The star right fielder returned to his hotel shortly after ten thirty this evening. He told reporters that he had merely been out visiting

some friends for dinner. Young Hardy was the object of a city-wide search all evening. He turned up missing directly after his game-winning home run this afternoon. But he is now safe and sound. We return you to . . ."

Joe sighed heavily. "Okay, Applegate, let's have it. What are you trying to pull now?"

Applegate snickered and snapped the radio off. "Must be kind of a shock to hear that, isn't it, Joe?"

"Maybe it'll be a shock to you and some other people, the Baseball Commissioner, for instance, when I call up and say this Joe Hardy is a fake."

"You wouldn't do that, would you, Joe? Not to an old friend."

"And here's one witness you won't be able to get to. You'll be dealing with Joe Boyd, not Roscoe Ent."

Applegate sat erect. "I had to do it, Joe. Now here's the deal," he said, his voice all business. "The World Series is coming up and no Joe Hardy. And who's the team playing against in the World Series? The Dodgers. Okay. And without you in there, the Dodgers are a sure shot to win in four games. Right? Now I've never told you this but it just happens that I hate the Dodgers even more than I love the Yankees. I couldn't stand to see those Dodgers win the World Series. Those Dodgers have *never* won a World Series."

"So you've gone out and bought yourself another hot shot."

"Right. Remember when we made our bargain last July? Well, at that time I was undecided for quite a while between you and another guy about your age. He's a television repairman, and as it turns out I should have picked him in the first place . . . not that it hasn't been a pleasure to know you, Joe. No hard feelings, you understand."

"But listen, the least you can do is give him another name."

"Can't, Joe. I realize it's kind of desecrating something to use Joe Hardy's name, but it can't be helped. It's a question of eligibility. You know — a guy has to have been with the team through a certain part of the season for him to be eligible for the Series. So he has to be Joe Hardy or nobody. The guy's gonna look like you, talk like you, act like you . . . everything. What I'm asking you

is this: to keep your peace about it and, incidentally, to let me have the combination to your locker. We couldn't get in."

Joe laughed, then fell silent, chewing on a blade of grass. Finally he said, "Maybe we could work a deal at that, App. How about releasing Lola?"

Applegate was silent in turn. "I can't do that, Joe. She has to be punished."

"Well then, I guess you know what my answer is. I'll be calling quite a few newspapers tomorrow." He rose, stretched. "Well, App, I'll be seeing you. . . ."

"Wait a minute now — just a minute. Now listen, Joe, first of all Lola doesn't even want to be released. Honestly. I'm not kidding you on that score. She doesn't want to be ugly, I'll admit, but she doesn't want to be released."

"All right, then — give her back her looks. Make her — " Joe paused and his voice broke slightly. "Make her the most beautiful girl in the world again."

Applegate did not reply for a few moments. Then, picking up his portable radio, he rose. "Okay, Joe. You drive a hard bargain, but it's a deal."

"You promise Lola gets back her looks?"

"Sure I promise. You know I live up to a contract."

"Yes, I'll give you that much anyway."

"Well, Joe, then this is it. . . . Incidentally, I still think that plate umpire made a rotten call. You were out by a foot."

"No," Joe said. "I slid away from the catcher. I hooked the plate."

"I still say you were out, but it's all over now. Well, I guess I'll never see you again. . . ." Applegate's own voice caught and, as if to cover up, he gave Joe a resounding whack on the back. "So long, old pal."

Then suddenly he was gone.

Joe looked right and left, but there was no trace, and then he muttered, "So long, App."

THE PAIN in his leg was less now as he headed resolutely for home, rehearsing once again what he would tell Bess, what he would tell them at the office. He smiled, remembering that Bess

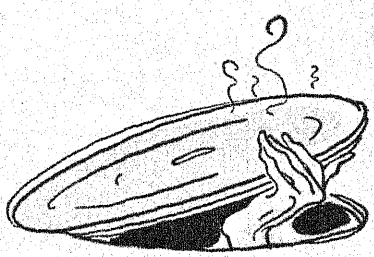
was now a baseball fan. Bess and the bridge girls had tickets for the World Series. He knew that he would not go to the World Series. He might listen to a game or two, but . . .

It was peculiar. Already he was aware of it. He no longer felt a passion for baseball. It was a game he would always like, but now he realized there were things more important . . . a woman's sacrifice, Lola's . . . and the way Bess's eyes had looked that day when she said perhaps she owed it to her husband to become a ball fan because it was a sore point between them. People got divorced for less cause, she had said.

He walked faster, following the familiar route, heading up toward the bus stop, turning to the right up the long hill.

The house was dark. There was no bridge game tonight.

He approached slowly, with an eerie feeling. Except for the change in the weather, except that there was no sound of Old Man Everett watering his azaleas, this might be that same night in July.





Douglass Wallop

LEGEND has it that Douglass Wallop's surname was given his ancestors for what they did to the Normans at the Battle of Hastings. But obviously someone must have known that in the distant future he would write a baseball novel.

Soon after Mr. Wallop was born in Washington, D. C., in 1920, he became an ardent fan of the rarely admired Washington Senators. Never foregoing this attachment, of which the happy result is *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant*, he has since graduated from the University of Maryland and worked for the United Press, the Associated Press and the National Broadcasting Company.

Now in the insurance business, he lives with his wife, two lively daughters, a turtle and a very loud parrot in a 125-year-old house which is in constant need of repair (by Mr. Wallop).

FLAMINGO FEATHER

A condensation of the book by

LAURENS VAN DER POST

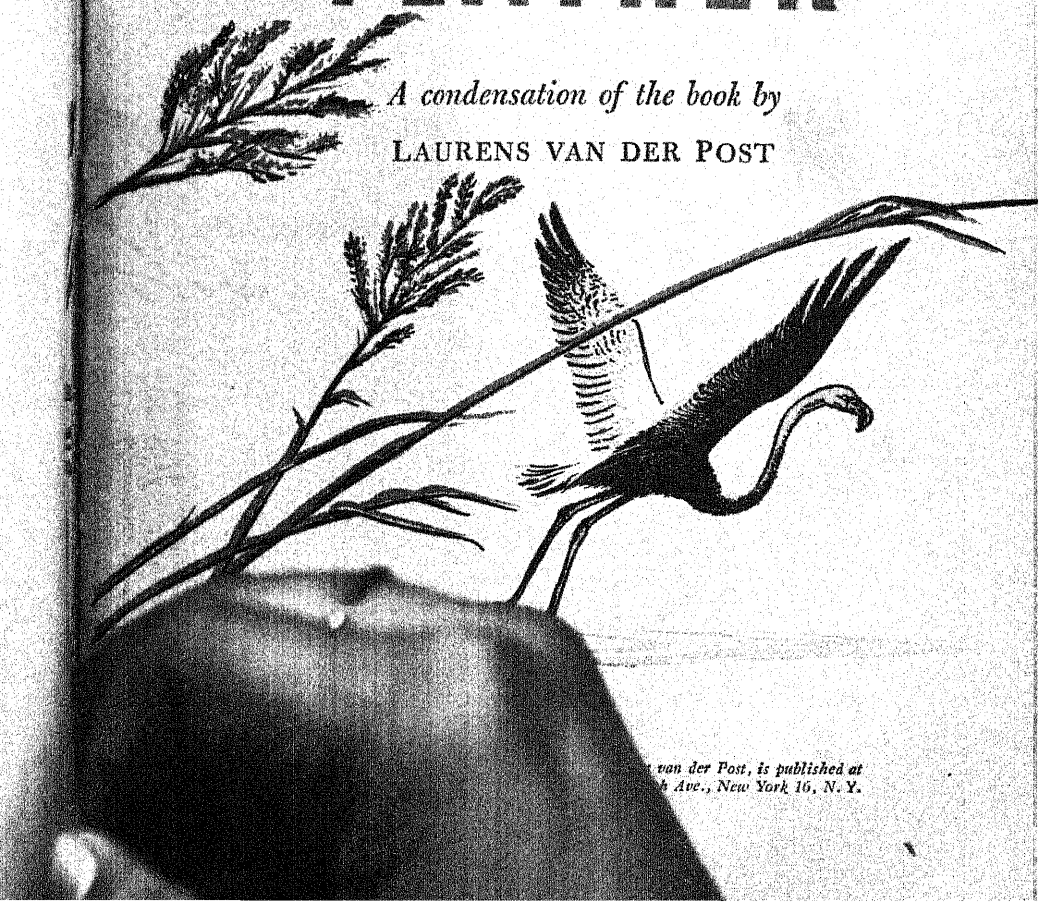


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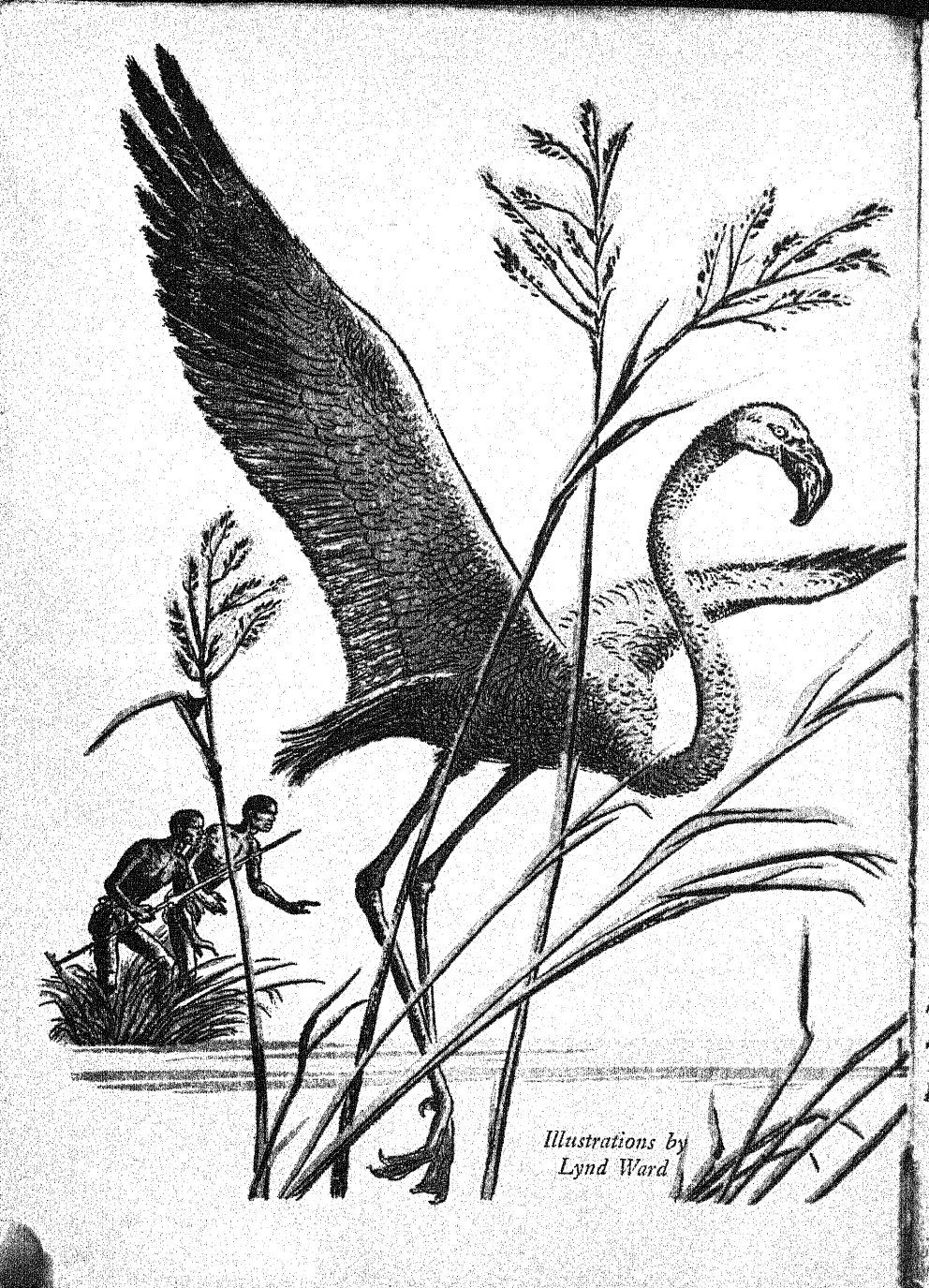


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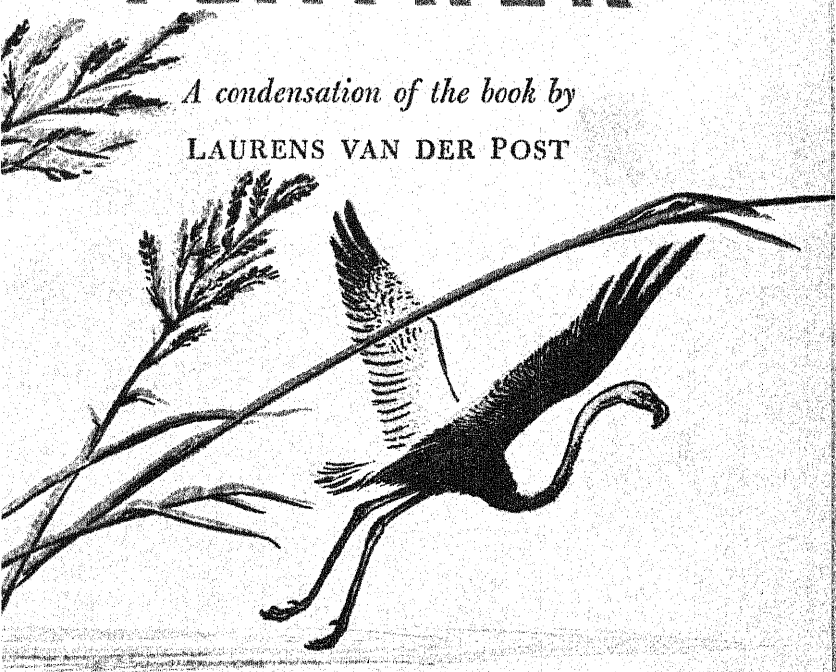


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Lynd Ward

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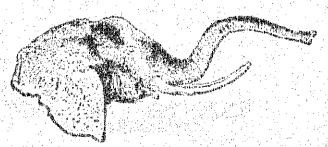


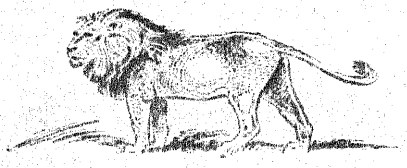
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"*Mattalahta Buka!*"—"At last we kill!"

A tribal war cry and a brutal murder shatter the peace of a quiet afternoon—and within hours young Pierre de Beauvilliers is plunged into a struggle to block a revolutionary plot that threatens all of Africa. Against sinister forces are pitted a hunter's instinct and his fierce love of a wild and beautiful land; only these give Pierre a chance to crush the conspiracy before irreparable damage is done.

Set against a vivid background of African bush and jungle, *Flamingo Feather* is high adventure with the ring of an authentic personal experience.





CHAPTER 1

MY STORY has its beginning in that moment when I came out on the stoep of my house in the turbulent twilight and heard on the steep slope below me the sound of desperate running, followed by the exultant war cry of the Amangtakwena: *"Mattalahta Buka!"* —"At last we kill!"

The year was 1948, the day July 12, the hour five thirty in the afternoon and the place my own home, Petit' France, which stands high on a slope of the gray mountains behind the village of St. Joseph's in the peninsula of the Cape of Good Hope. On a clear day I have a superb view over the blue waters of the bay to where the far purple Hottentots-Holland Mountains push Cape Hangklip into the Indian Ocean. But that evening as I came out on the stoep there was no view at all except village lights smoking in the fierce storm. I slammed the front door behind me because of the gale. The cry that had gone up and the sound of those desperate feet were still clearly in my ears despite the wind's moaning.

It was the last sort of cry I would have expected at that time and in that place. Though there are many 'Takwena, as the Amangtakwena are popularly called, working in the peninsula, they do not go roaring and plundering through the suburbs over week-ends as a number of other tribesmen do. I know the 'Takwena well. They are my favorite African people. I had in fact only a few minutes before stopped writing on my book called

The Mind and Myth of the Amangtakwena. Those voices ringing with their dark, primitive threat straight out of 'Takwena hearts and throats spurred me into action.

On either side of the front door of my house are two very beautiful Somali shields which I once brought back with me from Kenya. Each is flanked with a heraldic cluster of the decorative and deadly Masai throwing spears. I wasted no time on fetching a gun from the house but jumped toward the right-hand cluster of spears. As I did so, I saw the distinguished 'Takwena face of Umtumwa, my personal servant and friend in war and peace, appear at the drawing-room window hard by.

"Umtumwa, follow me quick!" I shouted, wrenching a spear out of the socket. A look I'd often seen on his face in the war in Burma possessed Umtumwa's features. Instantly he vanished from the amber window.

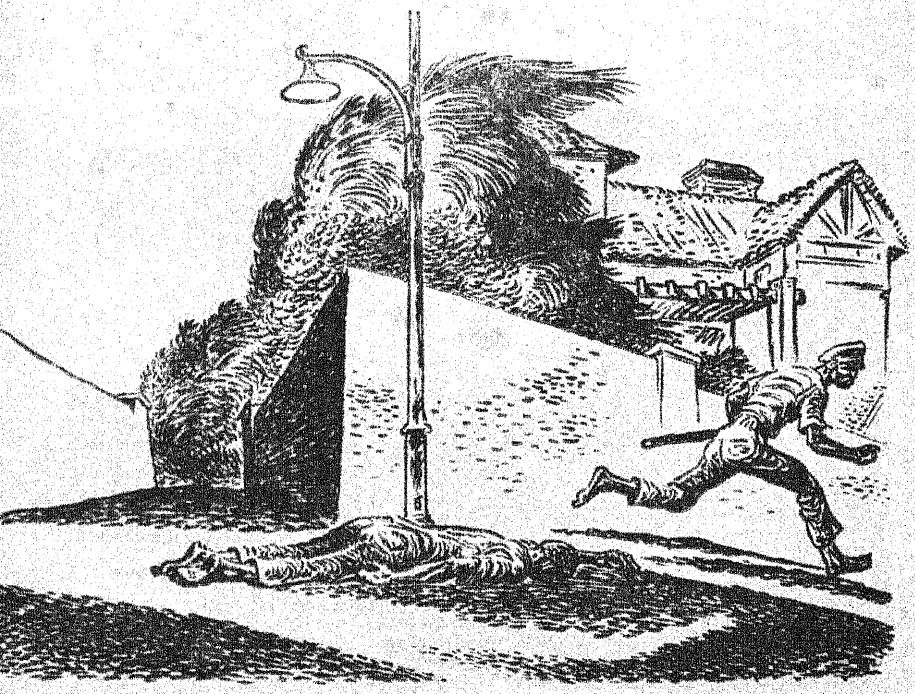


I've never moved faster in my life than I did as I went down the steps leading from the stoep toward the garden. Umtumwa came faster still, his naked feet thudding on the ground not far behind me. Yet alas! We were neither of us fast enough.

I came out on the dim, winding roadway leading up from the village to my house to hear, *"Buka eda-buka!"* — "Kill! and kill!" — then three heavy thuds and with each thud an involuntary grunt, the meaning of which was unmistakable.

The light of the nearest lamppost was dimmed by the storm, but it was good enough to show me a tall dark figure going down before a group of seven prancing black shapes.

"Stop that and stand, Fingani dogs!" I shouted at them in their own tongue. Finganis are a subtribe of the Amangtakwena, to this day infamous for their betrayal of a great chief two hundred years ago.



"Miscarried children of hyenas," Umtumwa roared. "Do as you're told, for Umtumwa of Amantazuma comes!"

The prancing figures became still with shock; then six of them broke and ran. The seventh took one more jump toward a dark shape on the ground, whirled a hunting stick above his shoulders and brought it down on the prostrate head with a crack like the smack of a bullet before he, too, turned and ran down the hill in long effortless strides. Realizing the futility of giving chase, I stopped by the fallen man. Umtumwa moaned in a storm of rage, "Oh, what an evil blow! Oh, what evil men!" Then, without waiting for permission, he snatched the spear out of my hand.

In a flash he had the spear poised above his shoulder and aimed. For a brief moment he twirled and vibrated the slender shaft so expertly that it sounded like a tuning fork in the air, and then he launched it after the fleeing man. I heard the spear take to the air with a silky swish, saw its point flash underneath the lamplight, making straight for the fatal joint of neck and shoulders in the back of the running man. But at the critical moment he stumbled, went down on all fours like a cheetah, and the spear scraped the top of his head and removed some kind of cap he was wearing. With incredible agility he righted himself and vanished round the bend. I heard a heart-rending moan from Umtumwa.

"No! Umtumwa, no!" I ordered him, for he was about to resume the chase. "Leave him to the police. Call the rest of the household and come back as fast as you can with blankets!"

He was off at once. I knelt beside the man, saying in Sindakwena, the language of the 'Takwena, "Friends! All right now."

He only moaned to himself, as I've so often heard the deeply hurt African do, not complaining but trying to relieve an agony by making rough music of the pain. I had time barely to establish that he was stabbed badly in several places and bleeding fast, when Umtumwa came back with my cook, gardener, houseboy, *umfaan* ('Takwena youth) and two rugs. We laid the wounded man on a rug, covered him and lifted him gently between us. Soon we had him in my big, warm kitchen on the floor by the fire, which was burning brightly on a large, open Dutch hearth.

"Umtumwa," I said, "get the field dressings while I telephone for the doctor."

I was put through quickly to my doctor, who said he would come at once. I came back into the kitchen to find my five servants in a tense half circle round the wounded man. Umtumwa was applying a dressing to his chest. There were two deep stabs in his chest, one in the thigh and one in the pit of the stomach. When I saw the crimson stain on his stomach my heart sank.

"Get me the morphia quick, Umtumwa," I said.

As I put the hypodermic needle into the man's arm, he suddenly opened his eyes wide and looked into mine. I shall never forget that look. His eyes opened with a great impersonal tide of light. He seemed to have just enough of his receding self left to distinguish my face. Then the most amazing thing happened. A slow smile moved over his thick, firm lips and he said distinctly, "It is you, Bwana. It is you I see. *Ekenonya! Ekenonya!*"

I wish I could translate the meaning of *ekenonya* adequately. It is a kind of ecstatic "thank you," an expression of the most profound gratitude of which the 'Takwena are capable. It is a "thank you" addressed not merely to another person or even to a god, but to all life. And as he said "thank you" thus, he died.

"*Auck!* My Bwana!" Umtumwa exclaimed. "He goes the long way to the great sleep. But he saw you, Bwana! He knew you!"

Yet I had never seen this man before. Africans don't all look alike to me as they do to many of my countrymen. To me their faces are sharply individual. I said sadly, "Yes, Umtumwa, but I don't know him. Have you any idea who he could be?"

"None, Bwana, except this!" He pointed at two thin black lines tattooed on the dead man's cheeks.

I caught my breath in surprise for those marks were tattooed only on the faces of 'Takwena royalty. They helped to account for the tense looks I'd noticed on the servants' faces.

The bell for the front door rang violently in our ears and my *umfaan,* Tickie, gave a startled gasp.

"That will be the doctor, Umtumwa," I said. "Show him in here. Then go and retrieve my spear, and have a good look round to see if those devils left anything that will help us trace them."

When my poor old doctor joined me, breathless from haste, he gave the dead man one look and said, "I'm sorry, Pierre. I came as fast as I could but obviously not fast enough."

"I don't think you could have saved him if you'd been here when it happened," I replied.

"Looks like it," he agreed, examining the body.

I, too, looked closer and noticed details I'd had no time or mind to notice before. The dead man was dressed like a sailor, in sky-blue jeans and dark blue jersey. A leather belt, undone, was lying underneath him with the empty sheath of an able seaman's knife.

But a 'Takwena *sailor?* I thought. That's curious.

The doctor stood up with a sigh. "How did it happen?"

I told him as much as I knew, gave him a drink in my study, and saw him out. The front door had hardly shut when Umtumwa stood beside me, his face portentous.

"Please, Bwana! Please come quickly to the kitchen!"

I followed him and found the rest of my staff, their backs to the dead man, standing with solemn, anxious faces, looking at the strange assortment of objects Umtumwa had collected outside. To this day the memory of that odd assortment, lying on the clean scrubbed kitchen table like a surrealist still life, is enough to evoke with unbelievable freshness the emotions let loose in me by the events of that evening. First of all there was my spear, and neatly impaled on it a cloth cap such as stokers wear ashore. Beside the spear lay an empty cheap yellow envelope, official foolscap size, torn, muddy, stained with blood. Then a pink and white bird's feather. That was all I had from which to read the meaning of this tragic evening. Yet my servants all looked at me as if they thought I would read it at a glance.

I picked up the spear, removed the cap and turned it round my fingers. It was clearly of Continental origin. There was no maker's or ship's tag inside it. Next I picked up the feather and as I did so I immediately felt my servants' tension rise to a steep, new pitch. I looked from one to the other, but they did not see my look; their eyes were only for that feather.

"Feather of a flamingo!" I exclaimed, holding it up to the light, and five pairs of 'Takwena eyes followed the movement of my

hand. "Where did you find it?" I asked Umtumwa. For some reason my heart suddenly began to beat faster as if it already knew something my mind did not.

"In his hand," he said, pointing to the dead man.

"What do you think it is?"

He did not reply but bowed his head, troubled and ashamed. The other heads followed his example. So there it was, beyond doubt: this feather was the cause of the tension between us.

"What is it, Umtumwa?" I insisted.

"Forgive me, Bwana," he said, a conflict of loyalties in his eyes. "Forgive me, but it is forbidden to speak of this. It is only Amangtakwena 'business'!"

I nearly smiled at the way he popped the English word "business" into his Sindakwena sentence. The others uttered a deep, "Aye. This is Amangtakwena 'business.'"

Knowing of old the importance of patience in all dealings with even 'Takwena who knew and loved me as these did, I put the feather beside the cap, and picked up the envelope.

Then I got the shock of the evening. The envelope was addressed to me:

Pierre de Beauvilliers, Esq., D.S.O.
13 St. Joseph's Place,
St. Joseph's,
Cape Peninsula.

It was written in a hand I knew as well as my own.

"Do you remember Colonel Sandysse, Umtumwa?" I asked, my throat suddenly dry.

"How could I not remember him?" he answered almost reproachfully. "Did not I share blankets with him and you many a night in Burma?"

"This is Colonel Sandysse's writing," I said.

"*Auck!* Bwana!" he exclaimed. "How can that be when the Colonel is dead?"

"Indeed he is *thought* to be long dead. But this writing is clearly his, and the ink not so very old."

"*Auck,* Bwana, there is powerful *tagati* (magic) in all this."

"Is there anything you know about this feather that might help to explain this letter?" I asked.

He hung his head obstinately and reiterated, "No. There's nothing to tell!"

"Listen!" And this time I addressed them all. "Listen carefully. Have you not told me I am like a brother to you?"

"Aye, Bwana. Aye!" They responded without reserve. "You are truly a brother and father to us."

"Then listen. In a few minutes I must call the police. They will look at all these things and ask many questions. They are certain to pick up this feather—" I held it in front of their hypnotized eyes "—and ask each of you, 'What does this mean?'"

"Oh, no, Bwana," they cried in dismay. "The police must not see it. You will surely not let them!"

"Why not?" I countered quickly.

"It would be very wrong," Umtumwa said lamely.

"How can I judge whether it would be wrong when you will not tell me?" I asked sternly. "What strange good reasons are there that you should hide their goodness from a brother?"

The look of misery on their faces was so great that I realized the battle might yet be won. I pressed on quickly. "Tell me what troubles you, and if it's as you say, we will not show the feather to the police and will speak of it only among ourselves."

Significant glances passed swiftly from one to the other of them. Then, somehow, without a word being spoken, their individual meanings became one. Tickie's young eyes suddenly shone with relief, and Umtumwa said, "Bwana, it is the sign for all the Amangtakwena that a great dream has been dreamt again."

"What great dream, Umtumwa?" I asked, my heart and mind going black with apprehension, for I knew something about the 'Takwenas' great dreams.

"I do not know that yet," he answered somberly and, pointing to the dead man, added, "Even he who carried the feather would not have known. All we know is that when such a feather is passed among us it is a sign that a great dream has been dreamt. Then no matter how far from Umangoni, our homeland, one

man from each group of us must hasten to be home in the spring in order to be told the dream, so that at the end of the summer, when the fields are harvested and the corn is in the bins, the dream can be lived out. . . . But I have done wrong to speak so much, for it is forbidden to talk of this to anyone except ourselves."

I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Am I not like one of you? Have I been a friend of your people for nothing? You have done right to tell me. I give you my word that we shall speak of this only among ourselves. Here, I give you back your feather!" I dropped it into his hand. "All I ask is that this envelope with the Colonel's writing on it be spoken of only among ourselves. It, too, is only our business!"

At that they cheered up and with obvious approval watched me put the envelope away in my wallet. My last request united us in a reciprocal role of keepers of one another's secrets.

"And this spear, Umtumwa," I went on. "It had better go back to its place. Only this cap, we'll leave that for the police to see."

He exclaimed with totally unexpected anger, "This spear, Bwana, he is 'no damn good.'"

"No good, Umtumwa?" I asked. "What do you mean?"

"He would not fly true. He is bad, bad, bad," and he shook it as a mongoose does a snake it has just killed.

I didn't agree with him, of course, but I said, "Then do what you think is necessary with it, Umtumwa."

He put the spear over his knee, snapped it, separated the wood from the head, which he kept, and threw all the rest into the fire, while I went to telephone the police.

No sooner was I alone in my study, however, than I was again filled with profound apprehension. I heard again Umtumwa's reluctant voice explaining that one of them would have to "hasten to be home in the spring to hear the dream so that at the end of summer it could be lived out." Our spring in this Southern Cape is three months, and the end of summer was only six months away. Yet the heart of Umangoni, where the great dream would be told, was several thousands of miles away.

I took up the telephone and summoned the police in a voice made authoritative by a sense of the need for haste.



CHAPTER 2

THE POLICE came and behaved very much as do police the world over on these occasions. They were conscientious enough and asked me all the prescribed questions. Much to my relief they appeared satisfied with my answers and hardly questioned my servants at all, the young inspector finally shutting his notebook impatiently and saying, *"Ag!* Meneer. We have dozens of these faction fights every week-end. Once these creatures get some illicit brandy in them there's no knowing what they'll do."

I drew his attention to the cap on the table. Like me he did not believe in the possibility of the dead man and his assailants being sailors, saying, *"Ag,* Meneer. These fellows don't go to sea. They wear any uniform they can get hold of. He probably got this secondhand from a Greek pawnbroker. All the same, I'll get the water police cracking on it at once."

Soon after that the police left, taking the dead body, and I went to my bedroom and stood at the window. The storm seemed to have achieved its climax and the house was shaking like the deck of a windjammer. I got into bed and turned out the light.

I would have liked to fit the day's events into a nice, neat explanation. But I couldn't. At each twist and turn in my reasoning I found the flow blocked, with seeming incongruity, by the vision of a young Chinese general who had shared a cell during the war with John Sandysse, Serge Bolenkov and myself in a grim Japanese prison outside Harbin. I hadn't thought of him for years, but now there was in my mind his slight figure and high-pitched, singsong voice, explaining his theory of cause and effect.

"You Europeans," he said one day, "have a tendency to select from life only the facts that suit your immediate purpose, and to despise the rest. We Chinese, however, are obsessed with the totality of things. We see cause and effect as but two of several aspects of the paramount drive and purpose of life. Chance, or

what you call 'luck,' is not just an accidental occurrence unrelated to the general order of events, but part of a fundamental law. You see, it is precisely the togetherness of things in time, not their apparent unrelatedness in the concrete world, which interests us Chinese. Our scientists have invented a system for divining the 'togetherness' of chance, time and circumstance for each individual. It is not perfect, of course, but it is amazing how it works. Would you like to try it?"

At first we had declined this offer politely. It sounded to us no better than a suggestion that we should consult a gypsy crystal. Besides, at this time, John, Serge and I were completely absorbed in a plan for escape from prison. Serge Bolenkov was a White Russian, liked by both John and me. The gallant Russian resistance against the Germans had revived his pride in his people to such an extent that his bitterness over the 1917 Revolution had vanished and made him determined to return to Russia.

But once our escape plan was completed, the little general's offer became more and more attractive, and finally we decided it could do no harm to ask him to divine the great togetherness of chance, circumstance and time for the success of our scheme.

So the three of us went to him for advice by divination. He told John and Serge to try to make good their escape in five days' time at two in the morning, on the night of the new moon. That shook our faith in him, because it was mid-December 1944 with the snow, ice and long-maned winds of a desperate winter driving from Siberia across the wide Manchurian plains. But he insisted that the "togetherness of things" favored escape for John and Serge only at that moment. Then he looked at me compassionately and said that I was not part of the pattern he'd just read.

I believe we'd have rejected the whole thing as nonsense if, on the very next day, a friendly Korean guard had not come to warn me that I was once more to be taken away for interrogation. So I made John and Serge promise that if I were not back by the night of the new moon they would make their break without me, according to the little general's estimate of togethernesses.

I was duly fetched by the secret police and I did not come back into the general prison again until two days after the bomb

was dropped on Hiroshima. I was then almost dead, but was able to discover that John and Serge had escaped on that night of the new moon in December and had not been recaptured. General opinion in prison, however, was that they could never have survived the dreadful winter.

John and Serge appeared to have vanished forever, and after two and a half years the search for them was abandoned. They were officially presumed dead, and accepted as such by all except John's mother and his sister, Joan. I myself did not know what to think. Somehow I couldn't accept the fact of their death. My uncertainty had been sustained — as I now realized with John's own handwriting on a blood-stained envelope dancing in the dark before my eyes — by a submerged faith in the timing of their escape according to the general's reading of their "togethernesses."

Then suddenly, as I lay there unable to sleep, it was Joan Sandysse's face which occupied the forefront of my memory . . . for, after all, it had all begun with Joan. It began for me, to be precise, at three o'clock in the afternoon of June 17, 1937, in the Grootekerk, the first church ever built in Southern Africa. I was sitting in our pew, my heart black with misery. Oom Pieter Le Roux, my dead mother's brother and only surviving kinsman, was beside me. My father was dead and we were there for his funeral service. The church was crowded with people, for my father had become a legendary figure in Africa.

In 1899, at the age of twenty-one, when the war broke out between Britain and the Boer republics, he had decided to leave Petit' France, his rich and comfortable wine estate in the Cape, and to hasten north to join the Free State Commandos. He was a superb horseman and shot, and soon had a unique reputation as leader of a daring band of scouts. He could hardly credit the news of the Boers' surrender at Vereeniging in 1902, and resolved bitterly that he would never accept so unfair a defeat. So, disbanding his scouts, he slipped over the Portuguese border to start a new life in a foreign country as a professional hunter. Even the great and generous Act of Union failed to break through the ice formed in his heart by the Boer War, and finally his friends at the Cape stopped urging him to return.

It was at this stage, with his bitterness and disillusionment at their deepest, that he met and married my mother in Tanganyika. After I was born, my father and mother and Oom Pieter and I wandered and hunted from one end of Africa to another. My mother taught me to read and write; my father and Oom Pieter taught me to ride and to hunt. From our servants I learned the languages and lore of Africa. We rarely went near the towns except to sell our ivory and skins and to replenish our supplies.

Then one day in 1934 my mother fell ill, and all proved and trusted remedies failed to cure her. Before she died she made my father promise that he would go back to his home in the Cape. I suspect that when she saw the three of us bending anxiously over her, our faces burnt black by the implacable sun of the interior, she realized we stood there not as three free men but as prisoners of my father's iron resentment over a war fought far back at the beginning of the century. Drawing my father's head to her for the last time, she said, "Promise to accept the past, not to judge but to accept. And homeward, please, home, my dear love." And my father said, "I promise."

In the Cape, my father's return caused a great sensation, for he was the last of the self-exiled Boer leaders and, as I have said, a legendary figure; but the labor of reintegration for so stricken a spirit was too great, and he died soon after.

So there I sat at the funeral service, with such a fierce pain in my heart that no tears could come. I hardly heard the somber words of the service but longed passionately to have done with it all, so that I could get on my horse and ride alone with my unhappiness far out into the hills. Then suddenly an odd thing happened. I found myself looking at a young girl across the aisle who had deliberately turned her head to look at me. Her eyes were calm and wide, and intensely blue. She wore a big black straw hat pushed back slightly from a broad white brow. Two long plaits of black hair fell over her shoulders, and this contrast of blackness and blueness, of the white of her skin and the black of her hair, of weight in her brow and hair and delicacy in the line of the lovely features, made it the most enchanting face I'd ever seen.

The magic of that moment lives with me still. I don't know how long I'd have gone on looking at her if I hadn't seen the expression in her eyes change from one of profound recognition to such living compassion and understanding that I had to turn my head away not to be completely unmanned. But all through the service I was conscious of her and the knowledge sustained me to the end.

That night I crept into bed exhausted by the emotions of the day, yet I lay awake until suddenly I remembered again that girl's face and the compassion in her eyes. At once the ice in me broke and I wept for the first time in years. When I woke at my usual hour the next day, I felt better. Quickly saddling my favorite horse, Diamond, I rode through the old gate at the far end of the property which now was mine, just as the dawn broke.

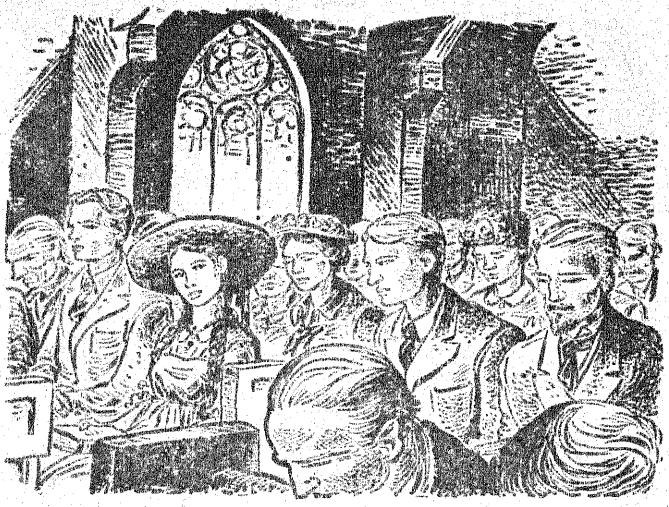
It was a crisp, cold dawn of midwinter. Almost the only sound was that of the sea going over the sands. I put Diamond into a fast gallop and rode along the beach close to the curled edges of the sea. When the sun was well up in the sky I saw three riders coming toward me at a leisurely canter. I recognized one of the Governor's aides-de-camp, another young man whom I didn't know and the girl I'd seen in church.

"Hullo, Pierre," the A.D.C. called out to me. "Do you mind if we ride with you? These two are anxious to meet you!" And so I met Joan Sandysse and John, her brother.

Joan at the time was thirteen, John twenty-three and I nineteen. By the time we'd reached the gates of my home we were friends and I insisted on giving them all breakfast. Oom Pieter was delighted to see me return, almost cheerful, with young people.

Over breakfast I learned that John and Joan were the children of Lord and Lady Meldmourne. He was Governor-General of British Central Africa, and the children were staying with our Governor at the Cape. John was there to see Joan safely onto the ship which was taking her back to school in England in three weeks' time, but he himself was returning to Central Africa to see more of it before settling down to a diplomatic career.

For the next three weeks John, Oom Pieter, Joan and I were seldom out of one another's company. Oom Pieter and I had



planned an expedition to the Congo as soon as we'd settled my father's affairs, and when John heard of it he asked if he could join us. To my joy, Oom Pieter agreed readily.

So while John and Oom Pieter talked Africa, Joan rode with me, went scrambling round my favorite peaks in the purple Hottentots-Holland or lay side by side with me in the sun on warm and sheltered sands. Her zest for living was matched only by her appetite for knowledge of any world she didn't know. She was indefatigable in asking me questions about my life, and I soon felt there had never been a moment when I hadn't known this eager young girl. When the time came for parting, it was like a surgeon's knife cutting me in two.

Joan was too young to know what time and distance can do to even the most loyal and loving hearts. Holding up her face to me to be kissed, just as she did for John, she put her arms round my neck and said confidently, "Promise you'll always write to me. Promise!" Then she handed me a flat cardboard parcel, tied in red string. When I undid it some hours later, I found an enlargement of a photograph John had taken of the two of us a fortnight

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before. It shows Joan and me on our horses side by side. Across the right-hand corner is written: "With all my love: Joan."

I kept my promise. But I never saw her again. The war came and we were all swept away in various directions on the unpredictable current of events beyond our control.

Meanwhile John, Oom Pieter and I became the closest of friends. John stayed with us till the war broke out. Then he was asked by the War Office to raise a special African force, and Oom Pieter and I helped him. When John and I were eventually ordered to Burma, Oom Pieter, because of his knowledge of Africa and the Africans, was left at base. To this day I see him standing on the quay at Mombasa, hat in hand, his little graying Napoleon beard pointed at the sea, while he watched us out of sight.

After the Japanese surrender, I emerged from our prison outside Harbin more dead than alive and, with John and Serge both presumed dead, I really did not care whether I lived or not. I did have a longing to see the Africa of my childhood again and, of course, Oom Pieter. From the moment I saw his slight, tall figure on the quay I began to feel better; better still when he said, "We are not going south just yet. You are coming up with me into the highlands on a good long safari first."

Although my body recovered on that leisurely journey over a favorite route, my mind and heart did not mend nearly so fast. I found myself more and more reluctant to take up the prewar threads of my life and to face my grown-up responsibilities. Even an appeal from Joan in her distress over John's disappearance failed to move me as it should have done. She and her mother begged me to come to England and help in their search. I promised to do so, but I always found some excuse for not carrying out my promise. For instance, I decided I must go to Umangoni, the land of the Amangtakwena. Most of my father's bearers had been 'Takwena, and when I was six one of the 'Takwena headmen had attached his youngest son, Umtumwa, also six, to me as my permanent companion. He was with me constantly, and when the war came he was in my company. I had been told that several of this company, including Umtumwa, had come back alive, and I felt I must go to them. No sooner had I done so and mingled freely

with a natural people who had known me all my life than a great burden seemed to fall from me.

One day I came to, profoundly displeased with myself, thinking, There you sit in the sun, Pierre de Beauvilliers, as if you did not have grown-up work to do and others to think of besides yourself. Soon afterward, I was back at Petit' France, writing to Joan that I was eager and ready to help. I do not know whether she had lost patience with me. All I know is that my letter was unanswered. So I resumed the task of tending my vineyard, and devoted my leisure to a book, *The Mind and Myth of the Amangtakwena,* until, on the evening of July 12, 1948, I was interrupted by the ringing war cry of the 'Takwena outside my stoep, and all else flowed swiftly from that moment in the storm.

AND HERE I was, lying sleepless because of a flamingo feather and Umtumwa's, "Bwana, it is the sign that a great dream has been dreamt again."

As a boy I had sat many a time with Umtumwa round the fire in the hut of his grandfather, an induna, or headman, who advised the chief, and I had heard him tell of the great dreams of his nation and the role they had played in his people's history. The 'Takwena are the only African people I know who have a well-organized institution for keeping their history alive. They have official Keepers of the Nation's Memory. The traditional version of the origin of their dreams, as told in my presence by the witch doctor in chief of the nation, the dreaded Umbombulimo, was this: "Sixty-six generations ago in the day of our great father, Xilixowe, the 'Takwena left their first home in the north. Far beyond the land of the thousand valleys, hard by the black split in the earth on the other side of the Mountains of the Moon, our people left their home and came south because Xilixowe dreamt a great dream."

And there you have it: at the beginning of all a dream, and because of the dream — great change. So it goes on and on, all through 'Takwena history. Only once did it appear as if this dream mechanism had failed the 'Takwena. And that occasion has a significant bearing on my story.

Nearly a hundred years ago the 'Takwena had reached a point of crisis in their history. Their march south was halted by Europeans advancing from the Cape. In the north and east, 'Takwena territory was harassed by bands of Arab slave traders, while to the west a Portuguese military expedition had claimed the most fertile of their grazing and breeding grounds. The King's indunas, therefore, wanted him to call in all the outposts of his people, regroup them round him in Umangoni and there make a stand. Even an enemy armed with the most modern weapons would be appalled by the task of entering the territory since its wide valleys, broad rivers and forests all lay behind range upon range of ironclad mountains. The argument of the King's indunas was formidable and the King might well have taken their advice if one of his subjects had not dreamt a dream.

One night in early June 1848, a young girl, daughter of a poor cattle herder, dreamt a dream so compelling that the witch doctor took her to the royal indunas to be cross-examined. Her account never varied: Xilixowe had come to her in a dream and told her to go to the King and tell him to order his people to kill and eat all their animals. If the 'Takwena did that, then at dawn on the morning after the last head was eaten, all the animals that the 'Takwena had ever eaten would come alive and all the 'Takwena who had ever died in battle would come alive, healed of their wounds and fully armed. Yes, Xilixowe himself would be there in that dawn to lead them forth into the last great battle against the white invaders and to drive them back into the sea out of which they came.

Much as they believed in dreams, even the most fanatic among the royal specialists shrank from the course of action which this girl's dream demanded. What if the cattle did not come alive on the appointed day? The whole nation would starve to death. For days it looked as if the dream might be declared false and the girl and her family put to death. But at last the senior witch doctor took the girl into his cave. Few expected to see her come out alive and those who did were convinced she would emerge transformed into a lizard or a hyena. But she emerged in her own shape and the witch doctor proclaimed a great dream.

It is typical of this primitive African people that once the dream was told them they lived it out to the smallest syllable of its context. So there came a day when there was not a domestic animal of any kind left in Umangoni. As the sun went down that evening the warriors cooked their last meal before the victorious battle against the white invaders which had been promised in the dream. Umtumwa's grandfather, who was a boy at the time, told me that all night long, by their leaping fires, the tribesmen ecstatically danced the greatest war dance Africa had ever seen. And then the dawn came.

But where was Xilixowe? Where were all the great warriors of the past who were to rise up out of the earth? Where were the resurrected cattle? As the sun rose higher the last hope faded, and when it went down that night it set on a nation in despair, a nation which knew that for the first time in its long history a great dream had failed it.

It is thought that two thirds of the nation perished by famine and, indeed, only one thing saved the 'Takwena from being overrun and exterminated. Just before the dream was told, the King's eldest son, 'Nkulixowe, had come of age. In accordance with national custom, all the young men of the same age were summoned to the capital and formed into a regiment under his command, and the King then dispatched them to make war against the Arab slave traders in the north. 'Nkulixowe showed himself to be a remarkable leader. He struck at the Arab traders and followed their fleeing remnants a thousand miles down to the bases on the coast, which he plundered empty. From there he turned back to the interior, collecting rich booty on the way. When his father's messenger finally reached him, he returned at once with his army and the vast herds of cattle collected on his raids, arriving to find his father dead by his own hand, the senior witch doctor killed, the people dying of hunger and all their bitterest enemies closing in fast. With his few thousand warriors, 'Nkulixowe manned the narrow passes into Umangoni and held them against all attacks while he nursed his people back to health.

Under his wise rule the 'Takwena once more became a powerful and prosperous people. When the danger of European penetration

during the great scramble for Africa was at its height, 'Nkulixowe asked Britain for a treaty of alliance and protection, which was readily granted, and to this day the terms of that treaty govern the relations between Umangoni and Britain.

I remember asking Umtumwa's grandfather if there had been any great dreams since that fatal June in 1848. He shook his grey old head, with the thick metal ring he wore as crown and badge of his high induna office, and said sadly, "Our dreams have been taken from us and no one knows if they will ever come back.... There are those who believe that 'Nkulixowe before he died said he was going to prepare a true great dream that one day will bring all our scattered people once more together." He paused and shook his head again. "But I know only what I know."



CHAPTER 3

THE STORM blew itself out in the night. I woke up to hear a warlike 'Takwena chant going up in the garden. In view of what had happened the night before, I jumped out of bed in some alarm, but one glance from the window reassured me. It was Tickie, making melodrama out of his task of clearing up the litter of the storm. With a sack held like a shield over one arm, a rake like a spear in his right hand, he was stalking a wheelbarrow piled up with dead leaves and broken twigs. Tickie had been with me a year now, brought to me by Umtumwa, who was his uncle. I didn't really need him, but I knew that he would not be there unless Umtumwa's family needed the little money he could earn, and I took him in at once. He was a fine boy, with an eager, fearless light in his eyes.

As I watched him now going through all the motions of a full-blooded 'Takwena warrior in action, the pleasure his graceful movements gave me was tinged with sadness. He looked so young and innocent, and the pattern of life which prescribed these movements was so old and so exacting, that I felt frightened for him

and again had the conviction of danger of the most pressing kind.

Then I saw two sticks leaning against the whitewashed wall of the servants' quarters, next to the door of my cook, Zwong-Indaba, and beside them two little bundles of clothing, one in scarlet, the other in deep green calico. I knew at once that Zwong-Indaba was ready for a long journey, and clearly was the one chosen by the others to go to Umangoni for news of the dream. I called Umtumwa to me, heard him announce the decision, and accepted it, merely saying, "There's an express train north this morning at ten thirty. Tell Zwong-Indaba I'll get him a ticket to Port Herald and will drive him to the station at Capetown immediately after breakfast. And, Umtumwa, hasn't it occurred to you that these people who came last night might come back?"

"It has, Bwana!" he said.

"Well, then, keep a good watch while I'm out."

Before sitting down to breakfast, I wrote a letter to the provincial commissioner at Port Herald, an old acquaintance of mine, and begged him to help Zwong-Indaba get to the frontier quickly as he was traveling on an urgent errand on my behalf.

Port Herald was nearly two thousand twisting, turning miles away, five days and nights by train. From there Zwong-Indaba normally would have walked the remaining thousand miles to Umangoni, along the footpaths that unobtrusively link one extremity of Africa to the other. But I knew that government jeeps carrying police supplies go some hundreds of miles toward the frontier and I hoped my cook could be given a lift in one.

DRIVING Zwong-Indaba to Capetown a little later, I noticed a brown commercial van parked against the curb at the corner of the street where the fleeing murderer had lost his cap. The hood of the van was up, and a black driver and a white man had their heads deep inside it as if examining the engine. I noticed that the white man was large, fat, rather knock-kneed, and had on a pair of black trousers almost green with age. The van had painted on it, in large golden letters, "Lindelbaum and Co., Wine and Spirit Importers, Exporters and Wholesalers, 359 Keerom Street." It seemed rather unusual that the vehicle should be thirty miles

out from its headquarters so early on a Monday morning, but I was enjoying the fine weather so much after the storm of the night before that I gave the matter no further thought.

A crisp, sunny winter's morning in this part of Africa is close to my idea of perfection: the dark blue mountains rising in clear outline, the blue sky purified in the waters of a great storm, the shining sea, still breathing deep and fast from its exertions of the night before, and far to the north a fall of snow, like the brush of an albatross wing, on the purple Hottentots-Holland ranges.

I did think a great deal of Joan and John Sandysse, but mostly of her. I saw her face in my heart as I'd first seen it that sad day in church, twelve years before. The feeling it called forth in me was one of hopeless hunger. Would I ever see her again? Was my offer of help too late? And now, how best could I break the news to her that John might still be alive?

I had not shown John's envelope to the police because I knew they would have tried to trace him by enlisting the help of newspapers and national radio. It seemed obvious from the way in which John had tried to communicate with me, and from the killing of his messenger, that if still alive he must be in great danger. A public hue and cry could only make his danger greater still. But I knew I would have to cable Joan at once.

We were at the station in good time. I found a berth for Zwong-Indaba and his bright calico bundles and hunting sticks in a third-class carriage in the Northern Express. "Remember," I said to him, "one person has already been killed in this business of the feather and the empty envelope. Be very careful. Beware of strangers and hasten, Zwong-Indaba, hasten to your home."

Then I left him standing by the train, silent and forlorn. When I came to the exit, I turned about and gave him a military salute. Immediately he raised his hand high above his head and gave me the salute the 'Takwena reserve for their royalty. The thought of my gesture comforts me to this day.

As I walked out of the station to my car, I was just in time to see a dark brown commercial van drive away. The golden legend "Lindelbaum and Co." was unmistakable. During my life I've acquired an immense respect for coincidences. I don't believe them



to be meaningless. That a chocolate-colored Lindelbaum van should feature at both ends of my journey to the railway station seemed to me, to use my little Chinese general's favorite concept, a fact of "togethernesses" which I was determined to investigate; but first I drove to the main post office to send a cable to a friend of mine and of Joan's family at the War Office in London:

PLEASE TELL JOAN I HAVE ENCOUNTERED IMPORTANT BUT POSSIBLY UNHOPEFUL CLUE ABOUT JOHN. BEG HER NOT TO BREAK NEWS TO HER MOTHER UNTIL LETTER CONTAINING FULL DETAILS AIR-MAILED TODAY REACHES HER.

Then I sent a telegram to the provincial commissioner at Port Herald:

MOST GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD SEND RUNNER AFTER PIETER LE ROUX WITH MESSAGE TO REJOIN ME AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

FOR MOST URGENT REASONS. BELIEVE HE INTENDED LEAVING YOUR DISTRICT TWO DAYS AGO FOR UPPER WUANDARORIE. PLEASE TELEGRAPH HOW LONG YOU EXPECT RUNNER WILL TAKE RECALL HIM.

From the post office I went to the police station nearby. The inspector who'd been at Petit' France the night before was off duty, but he'd left a message for me saying he'd ordered the water police to give first priority to the murder case. I decided to check with the water police and drove to the harbor. A constable at headquarters told me that the officer I wanted was out but was soon expected back. Would I care to wait? Saying I'd come back in half an hour, I went to look at the ships in the harbor.

Ships and the sea have always possessed a kind of magic for me, perhaps because my own life has been so landlocked. As I walked, enthralled, along the quay, past the long line of ships, I almost forgot what had brought me there. And then, all at once, I saw a dirty, greeny-gray bow poking out the tip of an undistinguished nose from behind a freighter. After the nose, equally unbeautiful, came the rest of her. Her decks were piled up high with a cargo of timber and she lay extremely low in the water. I couldn't tell who owned her, for her flag in the still air clung surlily to the stern post. I could not read her name either, but I could see the head and shoulders of the pilot pacing up and down the bridge and the crew in the bows and stern busily stowing away their mooring lines as she inched out of the beautiful bay. Then I saw two heads suddenly pop out of portholes in the central deckhouse. They were instantly withdrawn, as if someone behind had forcibly pulled them back, but, brief as their appearance was, they were — I could have sworn it — authentic 'Takwena heads!

So astonished was I that I could only stand there staring after the departing ship. And then I heard someone behind me let out an amazed, "Well, look at that!"

I swung round, startled. "Good heavens, Bill!" I said. "What on earth are you doing here?"

An attractive smile lit up his dark face. "What on earth are *you* doing here?" he answered.

Bill Wyndham was a great friend of mine. He had a gallant war record and had lost his right leg achieving it, but that didn't prevent him from being one of the most able and respected journalists in Africa. He would have had his own paper long since if it had not been that he hated administrative work and loved the open air. In particular, he loved the sea, and sailed his own boat up and down the coasts of Africa, in and out of every bay, nook, cranny, lagoon and river mouth. There was no one I would rather have met than Bill at that moment. Quickly I told him why I was there.

"And you, Bill? Why are you here?"

"Because of that ship," he answered. "For that ship's no honest, decent ocean lady. . . . Here, let's sit on these stones and rest my leg for a minute, and I'll explain."

We found ourselves a seat on a large concrete boulder at the end of the breakwater, and Bill told me that for eighteen months he'd been trying to go on board one of the vessels of the line to which that ship belonged. For one thing, the line was a new one and that was news in itself. For another, those ships had some unusual features about them, and moreover there was a rumor that they were built in Russia; were, in fact, the Russians' idea of Liberty Ship building. Whether they were Russian-owned, no one knew. The company's name was The Baltic and Gulf of Finland Trading Co. and it appeared to be registered in Helsinki, but something was odd, for the agents of the line did not seem to want Bill on board. They always had the best of excuses for heading him off, promising they'd invite him next time. And next time never came, although regularly, once a month, they had a ship in port. What was more, when in port the ships kept to themselves in a way no normal ship would do. Nobody except the master and his purser came ashore. They landed cargo and took in supplies quickly — Bill had to admit they were efficient beggars. At first he'd accepted their excuses, but recently he had warned the agents that unless they coöperated he would write a "negative" story about them under some such headline as: "Baltic Mystery Ships in Van Riebeeck's Bay." That had thoroughly alarmed them and he'd received an invitation to lunch on one of their ships this very day.

Now here he was . . . and there was the ship, heading out to sea.

"However," he said, "I'll have revenge with my pen."

"What's the ship called?" I asked.

"The *Star of Truth*. They're all stars of some kind: Star of the East, of the Morning, of the Pole, and so on, but *that's* the *Star of Truth* — believe it or not!"

"What sort of cargo does she carry, and what sort of crew?"

"Mostly timber and newsprint, I believe," he answered. "As for crew I can only guess, but I imagine a Baltic mixture."

"She wouldn't carry any black Africans as well, would she?" I put the question as casually as I could.

"What?" Bill exclaimed, looking at me with amazement. "Don't be an ass, Pierre. You know what the rules are against that kind of thing. We use black Africans on our own tugboats, coasters, fishing vessels and official harbor craft, but we'd never let foreigners use them. Why do you ask?"

"As I told you, that chap who was killed last night was dressed like a sailor. So were his killers."

"But I thought you said he was a 'Takwena," he remarked.

"So I did."

"Out of the question then. 'Takwena don't sail willingly. You know what they feel about the sea!"

"I know — and yet I can't help wondering. . . . Where do these ships go, what cargo do they take from here? And who are their agents?"

"They don't pick up much cargo," he said. "A little tinned crayfish, some wine, and so on. They go from here to Port Natal to put down timber and load wool. Then from Port Natal to Sofala, Mozambique, and so on up the coast, through the Suez Canal, on back to the Baltic Sea. And their agents, of course, are Lindelbaum and Company in Keerom Street."

Before I could stop myself I exclaimed, "Oh Lord! I thought Lindelbaum's were wine and spirit merchants, not shipping agents."

"So they are," Bill said. "But they're a lot of other things as well. For instance, they own a small crayfish factory here." He stopped abruptly and added, "Look! She's dropped the pilot and

is hard about for the open sea. You know, Pierre, that lady has something on her mind — and so have you."

"Bill," I said, "please don't write that negative story about 'Baltic Mystery Ships' . . . and don't ask me why."

His expression hardened, so I hastened on. "What is more, please be very nice to the agents. Accept their excuses with good grace. Don't scare them. There's something very, very odd going on. And I believe it's all got to do not only with the murder last night but also with far more serious things, an issue perhaps of life and death for whole peoples and countries. Every instinct I've got warns me you can't go carefully enough about this matter."

I spoke earnestly, and when I'd finished Bill looked me straight in the eyes and said irrelevantly, "You know, Pierre, I don't believe you've changed a bit since the day I first saw you!"

My relief at the warm tone of his voice was intense, and with a light heart I asked, "Why?"

He reminded me that he'd interviewed us the day my father returned to Petit' France fifteen years ago. He had felt that my father was a symbol of contemporary history. If a man with such a story as his could return like that and discard his iron resentment, then Bill believed millions of others could do the same. But he had realized it was I who'd deal with the future, since my father, obviously, had not long to live. And he'd feared for me. I was a young hunter, bred and reared on the veld, and what was I to hunt among the neat vineyards of Petit' France? Yet he might have known I would learn to hunt in other dimensions. After all, what was I doing here on this ancient waterfront? He'd known at once that I was on the prowl after big game — perhaps some arctic wolf or polar bear, who could tell? It was more than a 'Takwena murder trail that had brought me there, he was certain. So he'd do all I asked. No need to stress to me how hatred of one race for another was creeping over Africa. Ever since the war, he'd been aware of this dark breath of evil in the shimmering air. But so long as the moment of rebirth which my father's return had symbolized to him still lived in flesh and blood, as he believed it did in me, then he'd continue to hope.

"So don't worry, Pierre," he ended. "I'll forget my story. You go after your beast, *and go to kill.*"

I was so moved by the manner in which he'd spoken that I couldn't meet his eyes. "Thanks, Bill," I said. "It's done me good to be taken on trust by someone like you. What about coming out to Petit' France? Spend the night and I'll explain this further."

"I'd like to very much."

"Meanwhile, do you think you could find out if there were any black sailors in the *Star of Truth?*"

"Of course. But I warn you it's a waste of time."

"No, it's not, Bill. Keep it to yourself, but just before you came here I saw two black heads pop out of two deckhouse portholes of the *Star of Truth.*"

"It's most unusual," he said. "So unusual that it wants looking into most carefully. You know, I think we'd better hurry. Do you think you could give me a lift back to town?"

First I checked with the water police. The officer I wanted was there, but he had no news for me. As we got into my car I said to Bill, "Let's drive to your office by way of Keerom Street and you show me Lindelbaum's."

On Keerom Street he pointed out a huge, gray-storied building designed in a featureless soapbox manner. As we drove past it, a big American car drew up in front. A large fat man, with a round sallow face, odd Mongolian eyes and thick gold-rimmed glasses, got out and went up the wide steps with an agility strange in so large a person. The moment his back was turned I recognized the black trousers green and shiny with age and wear.

"Bill! Quick! Who's that going into Lindelbaum's?"

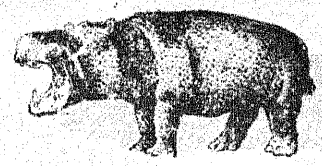
"That," Bill said, "is Hermann Harkov, Lindelbaum's shipping manager. Would you like to meet him?"

"On the contrary," I said. "I would hate him to see us together just now. What's he like, Bill? What's his story?"

"I don't know much about him, except that he's an old southwest Africa hand and very efficient. Don't let his bulk deceive you, though; it's a disguise. He's lean and sleepless inside."

With that Bill left me, and I hastened back to Petit' France to write, at last, to Joan.

CHAPTER 4



DIDN'T find it an easy letter to write. To tell Joan the facts was not difficult, but to interpret the facts and to indicate what course we should follow was a problem. I admitted how wrong I'd been in not accepting sooner her intuition that John was still alive. I said that, slight as the available facts were, I could not now believe that John was dead and I was going to follow all local clues. I didn't go into the 'Takwena aspect of the matter, but I told her that I'd sent for Oom Pieter and was flying in the morning to Port Natal to see what light the *Star of Truth* could throw on the matter. Once Oom Pieter joined me I would evolve a definite plan of campaign and let her know. Above all, I begged her to keep to herself what I'd told her, saying I was convinced that official investigation into John's fate could only imperil him at this stage.

With that I signed it, "Always, Pierre." I wanted to say, "Always yours, Pierre," but wouldn't allow myself to do it. As I blotted the page, I wanted to add, "Your photograph is still beside me, where I put it twelve years ago on my writing table." But something forbade this addition too.

I drove to town and sent it by registered air mail, then returned to Petit' France with the same sort of warm excitement mounting in my blood that I used to feel whenever my father and Oom Pieter announced a fresh safari.

After tea I saw to the business of my estate, which I'd neglected all day. For defensive reasons, my ancestor, the first François de Beauvilliers, had built his lovely Petit' France high on the slope of the mountains which overlook the present-day village of St. Joseph's. He was the first settler there, in a country full of wild game, roving Hottentots and bow-and-poison-arrow bushmen. The vineyards start immediately behind the house, round a broad spur of the mountains, and run on far into the sheltered plains

beyond. The farm buildings, wine presses, stills, cellars and fermenting vats are at the far end of this cultivated area. A brisk walk took me there in ten minutes and I was glad to find my manager in the cellars with all the colored foremen assembled about him, planning the next day's work. Soon I'd given them a program guaranteed to keep them occupied for many months, and was about to say good-bye when suddenly I saw Arrie, the oldest among them, born and bred on Petit' France, wipe some tears out of his dim eyes.

"Bwana, you are going away for a long time," he said. "You are talking to us just as you did the night before the war took you. Why must you always be going to places where your eyes cannot see us and our words cannot reach you?"

"No, Arrie," I reassured him, "I'm going only for a day or so. But I've a lot of business to attend to and may not see you as often as I'd wish for a while."

Then I left them. Already it was dark and cold. Just as I got back to the house Bill turned up, and I talked with him until late by the fire in the drawing room. I told him all about John and Joan, whom he remembered, about Serge and my little general and the escape from prison. I told him everything about the night before — except of course about the feather and its meaning.

He listened to me with growing excitement. "Did you recognize your assassinated prince? Did your servants? What's his name?"

I told him none of us knew, but that I had that morning put Zwong-Indaba on the Northern Express to Port Herald and Umangoni, and hoped he'd bring me back some sort of answer . . . though I did not tell him that I also expected a report on the dream and what it might portend for us all.

"Have you thought of the next step?" Bill asked me.

"Yes," I told him. "I can't go to the police yet. Too dangerous for John. I must begin by investigating it by myself. I've wired to Port Herald to bring Oom Pieter back as fast as possible, and I'm flying to Port Natal tomorrow to have another look at the *Star of Truth*. How long will she take to get there, Bill?"

"Three days and a bit perhaps. Thursday afternoon by the latest, I should say. But, Pierre, won't you let me help?"

I thanked him warmly and said what I needed most at the moment was someone wise and trustworthy to stay at Petit' France; someone who'd open my letters and telegrams and communicate anything relevant to me; someone who'd watch over my servants. Would he move in from the city and take charge?

"Of course," he agreed. "I see that it's important, though I'd much rather go with you. I can't, however, move in until the evening, for I have to lunch with Harkov tomorrow."

"Harkov!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. He telephoned to me just as I got back, full of apologies because the *Star of Truth* had been ordered to Port Natal. I was as nice to him as I promised you I'd be, and he was so relieved that he asked me to lunch. I'll let you know how it goes. But how shall I get hold of you?"

"Telephone me at the Port Natal Club every alternate night at nine. I shall call you on the nights in between."

By the time we'd talked out our subject, I confess I was more than ready for bed. Yet hardly had I fallen asleep when I heard Slim, my copper-colored ridge-backed dog, whimpering outside the window rather as he does in camp when there are lion about. I was awake at once and feeling for my gun before I realized I was lying in a solid Dutch double bed and that the noise had ceased. I listened for a while but heard no sound except the sea swishing its skirt like a sari of Indian silk along the sandy beaches of False Bay below. I thought I must have been dreaming and was instantly asleep again.

At seven Umtumwa called me with a large cup of hot coffee and I went to stand at the window to watch the dawn sailing like a ship of flame into the sky. Then I heard a loud wail from Tickie and saw him dragging something heavy from behind the border of my sky-blue hydrangeas. "What is it, Tickie?" I called.

"*Auck*, Bwana," he cried with despair, "Slim . . . he is dead."

I hastened down and looked at the dog. He was stretched out stiff and cold, his eyes open, and round his mouth was a frozen white froth. I recognized it instantly.

"What's going on down there?" Bill's voice called out from the window above me.

"Slim's been poisoned in the night," I replied. "The murderers have been back. You see, Bill, how necessary it is for someone to take over here. You may not find it so unadventurous after all."

"Did they do anything else?" he asked grimly.

"Don't know yet, but I'll soon see," I replied.

Umtumwa, Tickie, 'Mlangeni, my second cook, and I went over the house, outbuildings and home garden. Except that one flower bed had been tramped by human feet we found nothing amiss. But that decided me to give my servants the gravest of warnings, telling them I was certain this was not the last of a series of dangerous attacks and ordering them to arrange a night watch.

I said to Bill, "I suspect it's me they're after, for fear of what the man may have told me before he died, and they may leave the house alone when they find I've gone. But do keep a good lookout, Bill, and please take great care of yourself."

"Nothing bad's going to happen if I can help it," he answered.

Just before eight the post came and with it a cable and a telegram that had been received in the night. I opened the cable first, thinking this must be an answer to my message to Joan. It was not, but it was from Joan, sent off from Innsbruck, Austria, the night before. It read:

> AUSTRIAN PRISONER RETURNED FROM RUSSIA HAS GIVEN ME PROOF SERGE BOLENKOV REACHED WESTERN RUSSIA FROM HARBIN ALIVE. EN ROUTE LONDON TO CONSULT FOREIGN OFFICE. PLEASE COME AT ONCE. LOVE.

"Look at that, Bill!" I handed him the cable.

Bill whistled between his teeth. "But do you think it right for your Joan to rush into the Foreign Office with such news just now? Won't that set off an almighty official hullabaloo?"

"I've already warned her by letter," I answered. "If John were in the sort of situation where official interference could be helpful, I am certain that he would have found a way to notify the Foreign Office. No! We must go about this business as discreetly as possible."

"It's grand news about Bolenkov, isn't it?" Bill said. He paused.

"Has it occurred to you that the big game you're after might turn out to be the Russian bear itself?"

"Of course it has. I can hardly think about any other possibility," I said as I opened the telegram. It was from the provincial commissioner at Port Herald and read:

LE ROUX WAGONS LEFT FIVE DAYS AGO. HAVE SENT POLICE JEEP TRY CATCH HIM. WITH LUCK SHOULD HAVE HIM ON FRIDAY'S SOUTHERN EXPRESS. REGARDS.

Today was Tuesday. That meant that Oom Pieter could not get to me at the earliest for another eight days. It was disappointing, but it could have been worse.

I then cabled Joan:

DELIGHTED YOUR NEWS BUT PLEASE WAIT MY LETTER AIR-MAILED YESTERDAY. ON NO ACCOUNT ENLIST OFFICIAL AID. AM OFF TODAY ON HOT PARALLEL CLUE WHICH MAY BE RUINED THEREBY. IF THAT FAILS WILL HASTEN TO YOU FORTHWITH. LOVE.

But as I wrote I felt sick at heart, wondering whether this too might not sound like an excuse to postpone coming to her aid.

At breakfast next morning, Bill gave me a letter he'd written to the captain in charge of Port Natal. "You can rely on him as you can on me," he told me. "I know him well; we've been on many a cruise up and down the coasts. If I were you I'd go to him at once, tell him as much as you can and get his coöperation."

In my anxiety to get away inconspicuously I did not go to the airdrome in Capetown by car but went down to the electric-train station in the village, carrying a light suitcase, much to the chagrin of Tickie, who thought it was beneath my dignity.

As I walked across the road into the railway-station entrance, a Lindelbaum van came out of a side road behind me, swung left and drove off fast toward the harbor city. I had no doubt that its driver would get to a telephone soon enough to bring an observer from Lindelbaum's to meet my train.

Once in Capetown I joined the crowd hurrying out of the station to the main street, turned right, and in a few minutes was at the Airways Center. There I bought a round-trip ticket to Johannesburg and an hour later was airborne. Far below I saw Petit' France standing guard over its vineyards on blue slopes by the edge of the sea, benign and unthreatened, as if it had never known the coming of the fear whose shadow darkened my heart.

THERE WAS no one in the airplane who appeared unduly interested in me, but I suspected one of Lindelbaum's agents might meet me at Palmietfontein. When the airplane landed there, I requested a seat in the official airways bus into town under my own name. I had no intention of going into town, of course, but I hoped this might mislead anyone inquiring about me. Then I went over to the departure counter and bought a plane ticket for Port Natal under the name of Jensen. Before my fellow passengers of the morning were packed into their bus I was on my way to Port Natal, and once in the aircraft I felt free of immediate anxieties for the first time that day.

We traveled fast, and as the night came upon us we were circling high over the port, over black water sequined with the light of an immense concourse of shipping. A glittering pile of buildings rose up underneath our wing, then fell away astern as the pilot made a difficult landing with great skill. From the airdrome I took a taxi to the Port Natal Club. The club is on a slight rise about halfway between the ends of the harbor, with the waters of the wide bay at its feet, a lane of shipping almost passing its front door. This, together with the fact that the club offered more privacy than a hotel, had decided me to put up there.

No sooner was I in my room than I telephoned to the port captain and arranged to see him at ten the following morning. After a bath and a change into cooler clothing, I went and sat on the veranda and ordered some tea. At a table nearby, I happened to overhear a man complain that his 'Takwena cook, who'd been with him for years, had suddenly in great agitation asked permission to go home; and when he had remonstrated the cook had left him flat. Another man at the table exclaimed at the

coincidence: a friend of his had had the very same experience.

"Glad I'm not the only one," muttered the first man.

But I was far from glad. For my intuition told me that this was no coincidence. Zwong-Indaba clearly was not the only one on the long road to Umangoni.

I could hardly contain myself in patience for Bill Wyndham's telephone call. He came through punctually at nine. "What about your lunch with Harkov?" I asked at once.

"I warned you he's no easygoing, fat fool," Bill said. "You know one of the first things he said to me? 'I didn't know you lived out at St. Joseph's, Mr. Wyndham.'" Bill had realized then that only a full confession of all verifiable details could lull the shipper's suspicions and had explained that he was staying at my house.

"I don't know Pierre de Beauvilliers," Harkov had replied innocently. "He wasn't by any chance the person who drove you past our offices at twelve thirty yesterday afternoon?"

"That's him," Bill had answered. "He'd been called to town by the police. There was a murder at his place the night before."

"What!" Harkov had exclaimed with well-feigned surprise.

"A native murder," Bill had said casually. "Just another of these week-end fights."

"Do the police know who did it?" Harkov had asked.

"No idea," Bill had answered. "Neither Pierre nor the police seem excessively interested in it. Pierre went off to the Transvaal today. He asked me to look after Petit' France until his return. He doesn't like leaving his servants in it alone."

"Will you be there for long?" Harkov had asked.

Bill said he didn't know, and quickly invented a mission in keeping with my known character. "Pierre's gone to look for horses to take with him on a long safari. His uncle's up north collecting bearers and is soon due back here to report."

With that Bill had felt the suspicion collapse in Harkov. They had proceeded to have an expensive luncheon in the greatest amiability. Harkov had promised Bill dinner aboard the very next ship in port, the *Star of the East.*

"But," said Bill to me, "there was a sting in the tail of our parting. As he left me he said, 'I'll see you after I get back from

Port Natal.' So you'd better look out. He's due there on Thursday noon. He's not giving you any time alone with the *Star of Truth.* And now — over to you."

Briefly I told Bill of my uneventful day and finished by saying, "Would you tell Umtumwa to get out all my guns, go over them carefully, check the ammunition, and see that my hunting gear, mosquito nets, ground sheets, bags, all are in order? And perhaps, Bill, now that Harkov knows I'm gone you may all have peace — but please go on assuming the worst."

"Don't you worry a bit, old fellow," he replied. "You'll telephone tomorrow at nine? Fine."

"Good night, Bill," I said, feeling so reluctant to let him go that I sat there ear to the telephone for some seconds after I'd heard the click of disengagement.

However, I felt better in the morning. Knowing that I was sleeping not in a threatened house but in security enabled me to have a really restful night. By nine I had breakfasted and was walking slowly along the waterfront to the port captain's office.

When I was shown in, I understood at once why Bill had liked him so much. He had a fine head, large, steady gray eyes and a firm mouth. Everything about him suggested balance and proportion acquired by wide experience of vocation and life. I decided I'd do well to confide in him, and I told him the whole story from the moment I came out on my stoep at Petit' France to when I saw two black heads pop out of the *Star of Truth.*

"I've no doubt you're onto something big," he said as I finished. "Listening to your story and filling it in with mine, I should say you couldn't possibly overrate the importance of the matter. I'm forced to ask myself, and you, whether we shouldn't jump into an airplane and go straight to the capital with your story." He paused. "But first things first: the *Star of Truth.* I'm naturally interested in all the ships in my area, but this line has interested me particularly. What set me off — and I'm surprised that Bill appears to have forgotten it — was something that happened last year when he and I were cruising up to Diaz Bay. The day we left this harbor the *Star of Truth* came out after us, dropped her pilot smartly and stood out promptly north to sea, heading so fast for

Mozambique that we soon lost her. She has remarkable speed for a ship plying a freighter's trade. Imagine my amazement, therefore, when a week later we caught up with her. She appeared almost hull down on the horizon and passed us on a parallel course going fast. She should have been in and out of Mozambique long since. Also, she was well off the normal trade routes.

"Then, some months ago, a tug captain who had escorted the *Star of the North* out of this harbor and had later been in touch with Mozambique told me she had taken an inexplicably long time to make port." The captain paused. "You may think it peculiar that I did nothing about it. But if fast ships like to go slow on the high seas that's their business. Now you come with a completely new angle, however, and I think we should consider having the *Star of Truth* impounded and searched."

"If you do that we may recover our black assassins, but the alarm bells will have been set ringing and my trail will end just when the spoor is beginning to freshen," I countered quickly. "I've a hunch the *Star of Truth* will lead me to the heart of this sinister matter. So help me as only you can, please. For instance, is there a place between Port Natal and Mozambique where these ships could call or tie up unseen?"

He didn't reply at once and I knew that everything I had said was being weighed in his experienced sailor's mind. I trembled within, for if he decided to act as he had suggested, I despaired of ever unraveling this urgent mystery.

Suddenly he leaned forward. "I think you're right, Mr. de Beauvilliers. You were the first to take positive action in this matter and I will do all I can to help you. As for your questions: Lourenço Marques is the only port worth mentioning between here, Sofala and Mozambique, and when the Star ships sail in and out of there we're informed by radio. But on the occasions in question we were not informed. The explanation which leaps to mind is that they have a secret port of call on the way. But where? I know that coast well and there are no harbors or accommodating roadsteads for ships of any kind. . . . What happens between Mozambique and the Baltic, heaven knows. But I could check as far as Suez, if you wish."

I said it wasn't necessary, as yet, to go beyond Mozambique in our inquiries. "But what do you make of Lindelbaum?" I asked.

"I'm rather sorry for him," he replied. "People say he's just a bitter, vindictive Prussian, but he had cause to be. He came here from somewhere in the Baltic as the result of a pogrom fifty years ago, an undernourished youngster with not a penny to his name. He then got busy, made an immense fortune, and out of gratitude to the land which gave him his wealth was generous to its charities and schools and universities. Then came the 1914-18 War and what do we do? We burn his business down here and in the Cape, and then intern him. When this war came we proceeded to break his heart a second time and burn him down and lock him up all over again. No wonder he's bitter, but I admire his guts. After each fire he comes out of the ashes like a phoenix and builds himself bigger and better businesses. You've seen his place in the Cape? He's got another as big here, and a large palace out on Beckett's Hill. You know, of course, that he's also The Trans-Uhlalingasonki Trading Corporation."

"What!" I exclaimed in astonishment. For of course I knew The Trans-Uhlalingasonki Trading Corporation. Who does not who's been born and bred in the interior of Africa? It's everywhere. In every native city, village, hamlet, by the lakes and waterways, sometimes in a clearing in the bush where many footpaths meet, you find the corporation's stores and representatives. It takes its name from the great legendary river of the Amangtakwena, for it was in their region, Umangoni, that Lindelbaum first set up as an itinerant trader.

Now I suddenly remembered an evening in camp nearly a quarter of a century before, when I was with my father on the southern frontier of Umangoni. A great storm had blown up fast, and out of the bush had come a European asking for shelter because his truck had broken down. In particular, I remembered the stranger's face: the handsome, dark face of a man about fifty, but with an expression showing bitter and permanent hurt; the face of a dreamer gone wrong, of a heart imprisoned in a nightmare. It had frightened me, but not my father. He had much of the same thing in him just then, and it drew him to the man. They

had talked nearly until dawn, and when he left us my father had remarked, "There goes the commercial prince of Umangoni — The Trans-Uhlalingasonki Trading Corporation in person."

He then told us that when Lindelbaum had landed in Africa, penniless and alone, he'd found a job as a clerk behind a trader's counter in Umangoni. He'd seen his masters treating the black multitudes of Africa as if they were not individual races but merely one vast conglomeration of humanity, and he'd seen the opportunity presented by that fact. He'd left Umangoni for a while and then reappeared with his first sample shipments from England: calico printed in all the favorite 'Takwena colors, and blankets, too, woven in tribal and national designs. That was the beginning of his fortune, and of more than that because, my father had concluded, "he knows the native mind. I've not met anybody who understands them as well as he unless — " he laid his hand on my head " — it's this little bushman here."

I'd not thought of the incident since that day. Now it walked alive into my mind with new meaning. I stood up to go. "Please find out what you can about the *Star of Truth* while she's in port," I said to the captain. "I'll keep in touch with you."

I spent the rest of the day at the club writing another long letter to Joan and thinking over what I had learned in the morning. I was convinced, after discovering this connection between Lindelbaum's and the trading corporation, that I had but to stick to the watery wake of the *Star of Truth* to come upon the point where all these apparently disconnected threads joined.

Bill had nothing important to communicate that night, except that both Umtumwa and 'Mlangeni were convinced that they were under observation all the time they were on watch.

"Then look out," I stressed. "With old Slim out of the way, our enemy is probably doing a reconnaissance before attacking."

Then I told him about the captain's account of the *Star of Truth*. "Do you agree with him that there's no other harbor where she could have been lying up?" I asked.

"Of course I do," he answered emphatically. "I've been up and down the coast a score of times and I don't know of any such place. I admit I've always kept well clear of land for the last two

hundred miles before you get to Diaz Bay, because of the currents and the shoals — "

"Then what *is* the answer?" I demanded.

"Can't pretend to know," he replied, and we said good night.

Next morning the port captain telephoned to tell me the *Star of Truth* was expected in the roadstead at three, and he asked if I'd like to go out in the pilot's tug to meet her.

I was sorely tempted to accept, but I remembered Harkov was due at noon and I could not run any risk of his seeing me. So I declined, merely asking the port captain if he could borrow for me the uniform of a junior officer in the Harbor Service.

I spent the next two hours in a hired car making a quick reconnaissance. First I located Lindelbaum's. I found they had a large central office in Barton's Street and two shipping branches, one at each end of the bay. At the western end I looked at the *Star of Truth's* berth, cleared and ready for her. I then drove to Aliwal Street to inspect the twelve-story building which houses The Trans-Uhlalingasonki Trading Corporation, anxious to get all this over before Harkov arrived. That done, I drove to the port captain's house, where his housekeeper gave me a suitcase containing the uniform he'd promised me. I returned to the club to deposit it in my room. Stuck in the notice board of the club was a telegram:

HAVE ARRANGED TO TELEPHONE YOU AT CLUB AT TWO P.M. MOST URGENT. BILL.

The telegram alarmed me, but as there was nothing I could do about it now I drove out to Beckett's Hill to inspect Lindelbaum's "palace." It was a big, squarish, two-storied house in Port Natal style of the late nineties. The whole "Valley of a Thousand Hills," blue with distance, lay at its feet. I noticed from the marker at the entrance gate that he had given his house the Sindakwena name *"Dhua'muti,"* meaning "that which is higher than trees."

I then drove to the club and waited for Bill's call.

The tone of his opening, "Is that you, Pierre?" told me im-

mediately that something was wrong. Thank God it was only a burglary. Bill had been kept late at the office the night before. Coming back to Petit' France at eleven thirty, he was surprised not to see Tickie on watch. He was about to let himself into the house when he heard an odd banging noise coming from the back. Torch in hand, he went toward it, to find Tickie, blindfolded and gagged, his legs and body trussed over a stick. He'd been banging his head against a wooden post for half an hour trying to attract attention. Bill blamed himself bitterly, but I laughed him out of it, asking, "What did they burgle?"

"They took every scrap of paper out of your desk, but not a thing else. Most odd."

They're after John's envelope and the letter they believe it contained, I thought to myself. Aloud I said to Bill, "Afraid that means I'll have to start all over again on my book, for my manuscript was in one of the drawers. I expect it was just Harkov being thorough before coming up here."

"Expect so," said Bill gloomily. He added, "Look, I'll call you again tomorrow evening," and rang off.

I went to my bedroom window to watch for the *Star of Truth*, which was an hour late in arriving. At four o'clock I saw her odd, turned-up nose come round the long point where the bay opens out. She came out from behind the hull of a British Indiaman, her timber gold and warm in the westering sun.

"You may not know it," I said to her in a whisper, "but you've come to keep a date with me."

CHAPTER 5



As I WATCHED her swinging toward her berth, I knew that the time to act had come, so I quickly got into my borrowed uniform and drove to the port captain's office.

I asked him, "Do you mind inviting your colleague on the *Star of Truth* for a drink with you?"

"And you want to be the bearer of the invitation?" He smiled.

I nodded. Without further ado, he drew an official "At home" card from his desk and proceeded to fill in the blanks.

"There!" he said. "I've invited master, mate and purser. And look, you'd better give yourself a real name: one William McWane, second officer of the tug *Sir William Hoy*. He goes on leave tonight — and if necessary I can verify that you're he! But please let me know as soon as you're safely ashore again."

The *Star of Truth* had one gangway ashore when I arrived. I was just in time to see, from afar, the heavy form of Harkov bringing up the rear of a row of white caps bobbing above the gangway's wooden sides as Port Natal's officialdom climbed busily on board. My pulse quickened at the sight of him.

I had one advantage: I knew what I was looking for and where to look for it. I elbowed my way through the crowd of sight-seers on the quay and ran up the gangway. A junior officer was posted at the top of it but seeing my uniform he waved me on, pointing and saying, "Kapitan zere, and purrzur him zere!"

I made for the purser's cabin because it took me straight past the portholes framed so vividly in my mind that Monday morning in Van Riebeeck's Bay. They were covered by thick curtains. I stopped as if to do up a shoelace. Stooping, I looked behind me. The officer on watch was engaged with traffic from the shore. Clearly it was now or never. Righting myself quickly, I took my knife out of my pocket and rapped loudly on one of the portholes. At once the corner of the curtain flew up, and I looked into a pair of surprised eyes in one of the leanest, grimmest 'Takwena faces I had ever seen. Almost immediately the curtain whipped back into position, but not before I'd had time to see that the black face bore the tattooed sign of 'Takwena royalty. I quickly resumed my forward stride to the corner of the deckhouse, ducked underneath a companionway and went straight into the heart of the deckhouse. I counted my paces and then stopped directly opposite a door I judged to be the right one, put my ear to the keyhole and heard a voice saying in Sindakwena, "That was a foolish thing to do, brother, when we have only ten more days to wait."

I would have gone on listening, but an instinct, which passed

over me like a shiver of wintry air and which had saved my life many times before now, made me straighten up. I took the captain's envelope out of my pocket just as the mate of the *Star of Truth* came round the corner. He stopped short, then grabbed me by the arm and upbraided me in a foreign tongue, until the cool way I removed his hand put some caution into him.

"Who you? What you want?" he asked gruffly in English.

"My business is with your purser," I retorted curtly.

"Pleeze to give me your name?" he said more politely, but still with suspicion in his arctic eye.

"Second Officer William McWane of the tug *Sir William Hoy*. And who are you?"

"Ze first mate," he replied.

I said, "You'll do even better than the purser. Please give this to the master with the port captain's compliments." I put the invitation in his hand and before he could think up a reason for detaining me longer I was out of the deckhouse, down the gangway and walking fast back to my car, tingling with triumph.

I drove to an official car park, then walked back to the long shed on the quay where the *Star of Truth* lay. Strolling about in my uniform, I was clearly accepted as a normal part of the scene. When it was quite dark, Harkov came down the gangway and walked extremely fast up the dock. Going round the back of the shed, I struck out on a parallel course and picked up his gross, lumbering frame just ahead of me. Twenty paces on, he opened the door of a large American car and I heard him say, "Aliwal Street, George, but quick; I must be at Beckett's Hill at eight."

That was all I needed to know. I hurried to my car, drove to the club, put on my darkest clothes and sped to Beckett's Hill.

About half a mile from the turning to "Higher Than the Trees" there's a large roadhouse. I parked my car among at least fifty others, drew the oil-measuring rod in and out a number of times, wiping it each time on some cotton waste until the cloth was soaked. Then, cloth in hand, I set out on foot for "Higher Than the Trees," feeling as if I were once more going on patrol in the jungles of Burma.

The night was without a moon, clear and still: the sky was

packed with great, flashing stars. Here and there in the valley the night fires were lit, and they spread on the clean air the lovely scent of burning African wood.

When the main road lay like a far stream of sound behind me, I took my cotton waste and wiped the black oil all over my face, neck and hands. Near "Higher Than the Trees" I took off my shoes, tied the laces together and slung them round my neck. Then I entered Otto Lindelbaum's grounds.

I pulled some creeper with thick leaves off a tree, wound it round my head; then silently, flat on my stomach like a mamba, I worked my way toward the house through the undergrowth. The distance was no more than a hundred and fifty yards, but it took me nearly an hour to do it, during which time I saw a car drive in fast at the gates. It stopped at the front door with whining brakes, and after a brief interval drove away again. Harkov obviously had got there first. Finally, I came close to a lighted, uncurtained window. I rose carefully from the bushes and looked in.

It was Otto Lindelbaum's study, curtained against the front of the grounds but open to the side. He was alone in the room not a yard away from me at a long desk by the window. He was stroking the head of a ridgeback so like Slim that it hurt me to see the dog. I crouched, intensely still, while Lindelbaum stroked the sandy head with an affection which was most moving to observe. Of all man's inborn dispositions there is none more heroic than the love in him. And if love be denied natural expression, as it had been to this old man, then it will bind itself to an animal, or a bird, or to trees, flowers, a patch of earth. As long as Lindelbaum could stroke a dog like that, I knew there was some small island part of him still unclaimed by the sea of bitterness which broke in his face.

And his face? It was, of course, much older than the last time I had seen it, but the look on it had not changed, because time for him in its deepest meaning had stood still forever in one cruel moment of rejection by the people to whom he had so confidingly attached himself. I stared at him, feeling I knew all that mattered about him, for was I not François de Beauvilliers' son, born in exile and bitterness?



Suddenly the ridgeback growled and Harkov walked into the room. I kept so still under my wreath of creeper that an owl parked on a bush not five yards away. For two hours I knelt there. Sometimes I could catch a sentence or two.

Matching what I heard with what I saw, I gathered that Harkov was telling his master that the time of crisis had come. They couldn't carry on any longer without running the gravest danger of detection. In fact, the *Star of Truth* must be their last consignment to—alas! I couldn't catch the name. Of one thing only I was certain: the word was not "Mozambique." Then I heard Harkov telling Lindelbaum of an unexpected visit to the *Star of Truth* by a ship's officer. He didn't like it. Public interest in

the ships was gathering momentum and he wanted the *Star of Truth* out of port and away. Then to my amazement Harkov laid my manuscript, *The Mind and Myth of the Amangtakwena,* before his master, who held it to the light.

Old Lindelbaum exclaimed loudly, "Not François de Beauvilliers' son?" Harkov nodded and Lindelbaum said, "A remarkable man. If the son is half the father we'll have to look out indeed!"

"Yes," Harkov agreed excitedly, thumping my manuscript, "and look at this chapter on dreams!"

He went on to say that with this much knowledge I'd only need a few weeks in Umangoni to know the whole story. Perhaps I knew something already, for who could tell what was in the letter those fools had failed to recover? There was no time to be lost, for I was due to set off to the interior at any moment. At all costs he was going to prevent that; he had already arranged the appropriate reception for me the moment I returned to the Cape. But they must hurry. The only hope of success for the plan was to put it into operation forthwith, even if not quite fully mounted, and instruct Sydcup accordingly.

Lindelbaum said in his husky, resounding voice, "I'll draft the necessary instructions in the morning. Put the stevedores on full night and day shifts, and get the ship out as fast as possible."

The ridgeback, in an attitude of distrust and suspicion, watched Harkov until the door closed behind him. But Otto Lindelbaum remained for some minutes peering intently into the night. Then he extinguished the light and I crawled back the way I'd come.

THE TELEPHONE woke me at seven fifteen on Friday morning. It was Bill, calling to read me a cable from Joan:

> BELIEVE YOU MAY BE RIGHT BUT REGARD FULL EXCHANGE INFORMATION BETWEEN US SO IMPORTANT PROPOSE FLYING OUT TO JOIN YOU UNLESS YOU CABLE CONTRARY. I LEAVE BOAC SUNDAY. MUCH LOVE.

Perhaps, after all, she'd understood and forgiven the past. But with the spoor before me getting fresher every minute, I couldn't

meet her. It seemed unlikely now that I'd return to Petit' France for several weeks, if not months. In the end, she might be no nearer to me in Petit' France than if she'd stayed at home. But if her instinct told her to come I was not prepared to stop her, and there was something in me that was tempted by her being my guest, even if I was absent. So I said to Bill, "Look, for reasons I'll explain later we must move fast. I'll cable Joan to come next Sunday. You'll have to meet her and take her to Petit' France and be her host and protector until I return. I'm joining Oom Pieter today or tomorrow at Port Herald. I want you to charter an aircraft. Get it to meet you at Wellington, for I'm certain the Capetown airdrome is watched. Drive Umtumwa and Tickie, with all their and my safari gear, to Wellington. Transfer them, baggage and all, into the aircraft and send them streaking to the Rand Airport in Johannesburg. I'll be waiting there for them."

I told him I was certain there was nothing more of value to be learned in Port Natal. What was vital was to discover why the *Star of Truth* took so long to get to Mozambique and I'd perhaps only ten, no, nine days left wherein to do it, judging by what I'd heard the 'Takwena say in the cabin. I proposed, therefore, to fly to Mozambique as soon as possible, stopping only at Port Herald to consult with Oom Pieter.

When Bill rang off, I asked the club operator to get me the port captain. Waiting for the reply, I went to the window. The *Star of Truth* was no longer alone, for in the night a coaster had berthed herself alongside. Before I could take in more detail the telephone rang and I gave the captain an account of what I'd learned in the ship and at "Higher Than the Trees." I asked his opinion on the decisions I'd announced to Bill. He agreed that the vital clue must be found in or near Mozambique. Meanwhile he would keep a methodical watch on Lindelbaum's ships and maintain contact with me by cablegram. So we set about devising a simple code for the purpose.

"By the way, there's another ship by the *Star of Truth* this morning," I remarked. "Do you know what it is?"

"Yes," he said promptly. "That's the *Kudu,* one of the Lindelbaum coasters. They're all named after animals. There used to

be five of them, but the *Inyati* disappeared in a cyclone off Madagascar last year without leaving a trace."

Shortly afterward, our code complete, I put down my telephone in the club for the last time. At ten I was in a plane bound for Johannesburg, climbing fast into the air over the lovely bay, and at one o'clock I was at the Rand Airport. At two thirty Bill's charter, a fast blue and silver machine, touched down. The first person I saw was Tickie, his face shining with excitement and delight at his first taste of air travel. Behind him stood Umtumwa, in his dignified role of a much-traveled man of the world.

Half an hour later we took to the air again, but already the winter's sun was well on the decline. We could not make Port Herald that night. I fretted keenly at the delay but agreed reluctantly with the pilot on an intermediate base for the night, the airdrome of a small gold mine in the bush north of the Limpopo. The dawn next day met us six thousand feet in the air, and at ten o'clock we circled over Port Herald.

Oom Pieter was at the airdrome to meet me, dressed in familiar khaki bush shirt and slacks, bleached gray by the sun. His wide-brimmed green hat with band of puff-adder skin and Abyssinian swift's feather in it threw a shadow over his keen blue eyes and lean, sun-lined face, of which only the tip of a neat Napoleon beard emerged in the sharp light. He carried a small bag of the Magaliesberg tobacco which he was never without, and his gun, a seven-millimeter Mauser, was slung from his shoulder. That gun was his all. He lived by it and killed with it only for life and in defense of living.

As I saw him thus in the fresh shimmer of the tropical light, the many delicate and vivid memories associated with him crowded in on me. Without waiting for the steps to be mounted to the airplane, I jumped out to greet him. Taking his yellow curved calabash pipe out of his mouth, Oom Pieter met me halfway, held out a firm hand almost black from the sun, saying in Afrikaans, *"Dag ouboet"* — "good day, old brother," which he had called me ever since I can remember. And in Sindakwena to Umtumwa and Tickie, who were standing by, "Aye, I see you, Umtumwa; I see you, Tickie. Welcome to you one and all."

Then he said to me, "Sorry, but I've bad news for you. Zwong-Indaba is dead. Stabbed in the back between the railway station and The Trans-Uhlalingasonki Trading Corporation's store. We don't know by whom and have no idea why."

But if they had no idea, I had, and I hastened to tell Oom Pieter my whole story as soon as we were alone in the resthouse that the Provincial Governor had placed at our disposal. I talked as fast as I could while the airplane refueled, and Umtumwa and Tickie, silent with tragedy, went with a note from me to the police asking permission to pay their respects to their dead kinsman and recover his belongings. Long before I had finished talking to Oom Pieter they were back, carrying two calico bundles and a pair of hunting sticks polished and smooth with age. Of the letter I wrote there was no sign.

Oom Pieter, calmly smoking, listened to me without interruption. When I'd finished he said, "I agree, we've no time to lose. But now let me tell you something, *ouboet*. Ever since I got back here this time I've felt uncomfortable. Africa doesn't feel the same any more. There are a lot of people on the move, and if you doubt it go and sit as I did a few evenings back by the river where the three frontiers meet close to the great north-south Bantu footpath. If one man went by me, fifty did, plodding along, heads down, faces set. Odder still, it was all northbound traffic. Strangest of all, they were not just 'Takwena. I recognized Matabele, Angoni, Amangwana, Amaqabe . . ." and he mentioned half a dozen other tribes.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed in consternation. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, *ouboet*. I went back to camp that night without making head or tail of it. But now I begin to see daylight."

"You think, then," I asked slowly, "that they, too, have seen the feather and are hastening to Umangoni for news of the dream?" For I'd told Oom Pieter about the feather, knowing that my servants trusted him as they trusted me.

"Precisely," he said with a vigorous nod. "But what dream would bring all these ill-assorted races to the same road?"

"Only one," I told him. "The dream 'Nkulixowe is rumored to have promised his people on his dying day; the dream which

promises to bring together again all the scattered nations who have ever been Amangtakwena." I jumped to my feet. "Oom Pieter, with Zwong-Indaba dead, I must ask you to perform the most urgent of all our tasks: will you set off to Umangoni and find out all you can about the dream? I can't myself, for I must cling fast to the heels of the *Star of Truth.*"

Oom Pieter got up from his chair, reached for his gun and hat and said, "Look, *ouboet,* we can't sit here all day talking and yet talk to you I must. So let's get into that devil's contraption of yours at once. Don't ask me why now; I'll explain as we travel. Just tell your pilot to fly not to Mozambique but to Diaz Bay, a hundred miles south of it. It was once your father's base and I know the District Governor, Colonel De Fereira, a good friend of your father's. We won't lose time that way, I promise you."

So, calling the servants, we took off in our plane, leaving a thick trail of red dust flying like a scarlet banner from the tall black bush, and headed for Diaz Bay, while Oom Pieter talked long and earnestly to me.

Did I remember ever hearing my father speak of the Great Flamingo Water? It seems he had heard of it from the headman of a small tribe in the interior of Mozambique. The headman had said that if my father wanted game he should go there. Asked how one reached it, the man said he'd never been there himself, but everyone in his tribe knew the water existed in that direction, and he had pointed east-southeast. My father had taken a compass bearing on the headman's outstretched arm but, working it out on his map later, he was disappointed because it emerged on the coast at a point between the Uhlalingasonki River and that other great river, the Black Umpafuti, where the map showed only marsh and swamp.

My father never mentioned it again, but when Oom Pieter was in Diaz Bay last year, to his amazement Colonel De Fereira had asked him to find this great water for him, promising all assistance and facilities. Oom Pieter had been tempted, but he was committed to other work at the time. However, the moment I'd told him about the curious behavior of the Star ships the thought of the Great Flamingo Water had rushed into his mind.

There, he was certain, was the safe, unknown anchorage I sought. So why didn't I go to De Fereira, accept the proposition he'd made last year, and set out to find that water as fast as I could?

Of course, it was a shot in the dark and if it didn't come off I might lose forever the trail of the *Star of Truth*. Yet Oom Pieter's suggestion made strange sense to me. There was a link tying together the murder of the royal messenger, the *Star of Truth*, the dream of the 'Takwena, and somehow the life of John Sandysse — if only I could find that link.

I called Umtumwa. "Umtumwa, why must it always be a flamingo feather that announces the dream?" I asked him.

"Because, Bwana, in Xilixowe's great dream a flamingo flew in front to lead him and all his people south, far on to the place where the Amangtakwena have not yet reached, to the great home on the water where once in their lifetime all the flamingos on earth come and go."

"There's your answer, Oom Pieter," I said. "The Great Flamingo Water it shall be."

ON OUR ARRIVAL at Diaz Bay Colonel De Fereira gave us all the help we needed, and a guarantee of absolute secrecy. So responsive was this proud, greathearted little Governor to all the considerations we put to him that, though it was already four o'clock when we arrived, we were able to leave his palace at sundown. Our first problem was bearers. We raised only nine that night from the convict dungeons in the old Portuguese fort. All the other men we approached declined flatly when they heard the direction of my safari, despite the promise of a full pardon. And I preferred nine willing bearers to ninety sullenly driven.

Oom Pieter had long since worked out our route. The Great Flamingo Water, if it existed, lay between the vast swamps created along the coast by the Black Umpafuti and the Uhlalingasonki rivers. And as he'd so often taught me when stalking game, the long way round the rear was often the quickest way to the quarry. He pointed on the map to the remote police post of Fort Emmanuel on the Black Umpafuti and said, if I crossed the river there and set out east-southeast, he thought I might

strike the Great Water within a hundred and twenty to a hundred and forty miles. And if the *Star of Truth* were to turn up there by Monday week, as the 'Takwena conversation I'd overheard in the ship suggested, an average march of twenty miles a day should bring me there in time.

However, a great deal would depend on the nature of the country. I therefore suggested a quick reconnaissance by air. We were on the Diaz Bay landing ground at dawn the next morning and by eight o'clock three hundred miles south of it. Unluckily, over the mouth and swamp of the Uhlalingasonki the mist rolled heavily like the satiny back of an avalanche between us and the coast. But on our return a curious thing happened. The mist suddenly became agitated and torn apart, and in that fraction of a second before the rents closed again I saw below me streak upon streak of brilliant fire. I instantly said to our pilot, "Pinpoint our position here and give me the bearing when we land."

Back at Diaz Bay, we went over Oom Pieter's plans. He was to take the plane to Mozambique and await the arrival of the *Star of Truth*. He'd investigate her activities there, then would hasten to Umangoni on the track of the dream. In particular, I urged him to concentrate on what 'Nkulixowe had said on his deathbed about the dream he was going to prepare. There was certain to be some old induna who would have this information. 'Nkulixowe, with his father's disaster so vividly in his mind, surely wouldn't have died without leaving safeguards against another "false" dream. If we could find out the nature of the dream and its safeguards, and the nature of the mysterious Star ships' activities, we should be able to piece the puzzle together.

Poor Oom Pieter! He agreed to everything, but how he longed to come on my journey with me! That night on the way back to our resthouse, he did a thing I had never known him to do before. Ardent Protestant though he was, he asked me to step into the little Roman Catholic church. We went into it quietly and, kneeling down, Oom Pieter prayed silently for about a quarter of an hour. As we came out, he said, "Yes, we must go on to fight the good fight to the end of our days for, though this Africa of ours is truly God's country, the devil is still largely in



possession of it, and the battle for its soul must be long and bitter."

Next day I set off with Umtumwa, Tickie and the nine bearers in the three military jeeps the Governor had provided. The last thing I did was to hand Oom Pieter a letter for Joan, one for Bill and another for the port captain. I left him standing by the steps of the resthouse, staring after us.

We traveled all through the night, the next morning and early afternoon on the roughest of tracks through broken bushveld. At three o'clock on Monday afternoon we woke up an astonished Portuguese lieutenant halfway through his siesta at Fort Emmanuel. When I told him that I wanted to cross the river by the ferry and go on safari deep on the other side, he said he wouldn't allow me to go to certain death. Did I not know that on the other side of the river lay the Dead Land? Not for fifty years had a soul lived in it. It was the worst sleeping-sickness area in Africa. The moment I set foot there the tsetse fly would be on me. And beyond the Dead Land? Why, nothing but the great forest of Duk-aduk-duk! Had I not heard of it? Was I as ignorant as I appeared foolhardy? This forest was so black and thick that in it the human heart went duk-aduk-duk. No one had ever penetrated it, and heaven alone knew what monsters infested it. "Why go to your death there, senhor," he concluded in despair, "when there are plenty of other places to shoot game?"

In the end the Governor's written instructions left him no argument; he turned out twelve convicts and a black corporal to man the precarious ferry. No sooner were we at the ferryside than a sweating radio operator came running, waving a cable. It was from Oom Pieter and read:

> DEVIL'S MOTOR ARRIVED MOZAMBIQUE SAFELY. ZULU SIGNALS YOU HE HAS HOPES PERSUADING IMPATIENT LADY PROLONG HER STAY FORTY-EIGHT HOURS. GODSPEED OUBOET.

Zulu was my port captain's code name; the impatient lady needs no explanation. My heart warmed, for every hour the *Star of Truth* could be retarded might be decisive.

CHAPTER 6



N HOUR before sundown Umtumwa, Tickie, nine convict bearers and I were landed on the edge of the Dead Land on the southern bank of the Black Umpafuti River, which coiled and uncoiled its fat, anaconda current at our feet, the evening sun showing up the glint of sulfur on its oily scales.

I watched the primitive ferry being pulled back to the far side of the river as fast as the convicts could pull on the chains, and to the accompaniment of an improvised tune sung in their deep bass voices.

*Aye, we have left him there, the red stranger,**
Heave ha! heave, heave ha!
We have left him by the Dead Land and Black Umpafuti water,
Heave ha! heave, heave ha!
We have left him, to return to our food by the fire,
Heave ha! heave, heave ha!

The sound of human singing died. My own small band seemed to look smaller, and my hope more forlorn. Calling Umtumwa, I told him that I would break my normal safari rule of pitching camp early and push on for two or three hours so as to get as much bush as possible between my bearers and even such slender temptations as those of Fort Emmanuel. I put him at the head of the line of loaded bearers and I ordered Tickie to be dispatch runner between head and tail to keep the line compact, since none of us knew what lay ahead. I put myself at the tail because experience has taught me that on single file in the bush that is where the trouble collects. As I spoke this reason aloud to Umtumwa, I noticed a tall Somali bearer called Said listening to me

*We are red to most Africans until we teach them to think of us as white.

with an odd humorous twist to his mouth. Then I gave the bearers the command: "All set. Take up. And in the name of God, go."

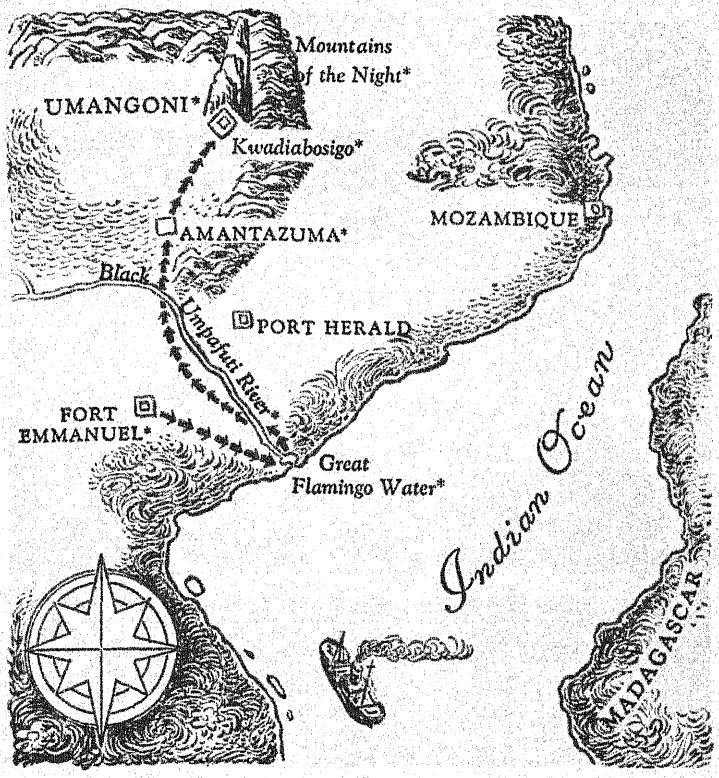
The silence of the Dead Land broke like a great dead sea over us. Down by the river a family of apes suddenly went hysterical with fear at the approaching dark. Then silence again. Ahead of me Umtumwa, gun on arm, disappeared down the narrow track, one gray box after another bobbing jauntily up and down, following him out of yellow sunset air into purple shadow. At the center, Tickie marched proudly, a gun on each shoulder, medicine pack on his back. I fell in behind the last bearer and, as I listened to the pad-pad of naked feet ahead, from far down within me my past in the interior took over and I was more content.

We marched in silence for two hours. Once away from the river the bush thinned and the trees arranged themselves in heavy clusters — ideal tsetse country indeed. We made camp that night on the steep bank of a dry river bed.

Soon we had a fire lit, mosquito nets up, water drawn, and a tin of tea and a tin of mealie-meal porridge on the boil. Sitting apart on a boulder, I studied the strangely assorted party. Their jailer at Diaz Bay had warned me: "Remember, senhor, murderers all!" But all I could see was that they were as tired as they were undernourished, so after they had eaten I ordered them to bed.

Sunrise found us stepping out smartly. It was a perfect tropical winter morning. The track we were on had been made by the feet of vanished men. We came across traces of ancient settlements: crumbling stone walls of huts, scattered pottery. But the deeper we went into the bush the fewer these tokens became, until finally there was only the narrow footpath to bear witness to the life which had once invested this far bushveld. Yet as long as that footpath lasted, I thought, I would have hope, for it suggested that the obstinate rumor of the Great Flamingo Water was a surviving fragment of authentic memory.

At our first halt I took out my map and compass and took the bearing almost due east-southeast from Fort Emmanuel. I was delighted to find that the track bore down on the point of the map where, from the plane, I'd seen brilliant ruby fire leaping through the satin mist. I was about to tell Umtumwa the good



news when I felt insects alighting on the back of my neck. I slapped at them and retrieved three dead flies, whose gray unimpressive appearance belied their deadliness. The bearers were also gloomily slapping at their bodies. For all the dancing light of day around us, a deadly nightshade had risen in our midst.

I said to Umtumwa, "Boil some water and give every man a mugful of hot sweet tea, and then all come and listen to me."

When I had them around me, I said, "We all know this is the worst fly country in Africa. But I have powerful *'mhuti,* mighty medicine, with me that will keep you all safe. Here!" At this,

unashamed of my lie because I knew that, with luck, I should have us all back in a civilized hospital where we could be cured before the disease had a fatal grip on us, I took a bottle of Paludrine out of the pack on Tickie's back and put a white pill in each man's hand, saying, "Swallow one of these with your tea morning and night, and you need think no more of the tsetse fly."

The crisis vanished and a brisk, spirited conversation, such as I had not heard before, flared up. But as we set off again, I heard a loud exclamation of dismay on the track in front of me, followed by a thud. I hastened forward. A bearer had stumbled and fallen and lay with the contents of his load scattered about him. What I saw on that emaciated face in the dust decided me to change my plan and pick the first good camp site, for clearly De Fereira's jailers hadn't believed in overfeeding their charges.

The site I chose was on a fiery basalt bluff. Below us was a deep, wide vlei (a grassy depression where water collects during rains), lush and green-gold in the afternoon sun, and every fifty yards or so a sky-blue pool. The cooling air resounded with the homing songs of many birds, guinea fowl, ducks and geese. Calling Tickie to accompany me, I picked a game track covered with fresh spoor and went down it, my back to the sun.

We walked till my eye caught the glint of long water in the yellow vlei ahead. Close by, hundreds of animals were drinking or waiting to drink. Taking out my field glasses I focused them, my heart beating fast. All Africa was in that moment — the whole cast of the natural, primordial theater of Africa. A noble water buck, accompanied by his females, sank to his knees and drank deep of the blue water before he stood up and made his exit with great dignity into the wings of singing reeds. A kudu bull, his coat a Persian blue broken by four bands of white, his head so proudly crowned with horn that he could scarcely hold it erect, walked easily through herds of lesser breeds to stand on the water's edge. I saw a herd of impatient zebra charge down fast, stop so short and hard that the dust shot up over the pool like a flag translucent in the sun. Then red and white impalas, fearful of everything, drank with quick frenzy, throwing glances over their elegant shoulders until, satisfied at last, they bounded on light,

elastic toes from the stage. High on a treetop, a huge baboon, lookout for his flock, scratched his auburn head with a long, purple finger. Then a trio of earth-brown grouse flew up on frantic wings; a black ostrich suddenly took to his heels. And all the animals at the water stopped drinking — yes, all, with quick electric ears, narrowed eyes, their nostrils sniffing the motionless air. Obviously it was the moment for the royal villain of this imperial piece to make his entry.

Down the track between us and the water came a lone sable bull. He walked slowly, stopping every few yards to listen. He was old, wise and lonely. His long, sharp horns swept back to his shoulders and his long, elegant face with white cheeks and striped nose wore the strange, made-up pallor of a tragic clown.

If I had to kill, I could kill less cruelly by shooting this superb reject from the herd, I thought, so I waited until he paused, sideways to me, at only fifty yards, and then I shot him through the heart. Slowly he went down on his knees, head desperately trying to keep erect, but finally, like a destroyer holed in the bows sinking at sea, he glided steeply forward and vanished in the grass. In an instant the bright company by the pool was gone.

That night, tired as my bearers were, they ate as I've seldom seen people eat, and by nine, well content, they were all asleep. Before I turned in, I thought to renew a custom of Oom Pieter's which he never failed to observe in the bush because it helps the memory. So I said to Umtumwa, "You've led us well. I ask you to name the camp for us."

Waving his hand at the sleeping bearers, he said with a laugh, "Master, call him Belly-full." And so Belly-full Camp it was.

Next morning we were back on our track, stepping out briskly, myself taking the lead. We were climbing out of the Black Umpafuti catchment country. The land was getting drier, the bush darker with thorn tree, and the tsetse fly was worse than ever. Often I saw a vulture or maribou stork sitting in a tree, never taking an eye full of sinister hope from my small line.

I was tempted to shoot a twelve-foot mamba which just missed my head from his perch in a tree. That I didn't do so was largely on account of Umtumwa and Tickie. The 'Takwena regard a

snake as a privileged messenger from their dead ancestors, or even an ancestor himself, the long, yellow cobra being considered the most important of all.

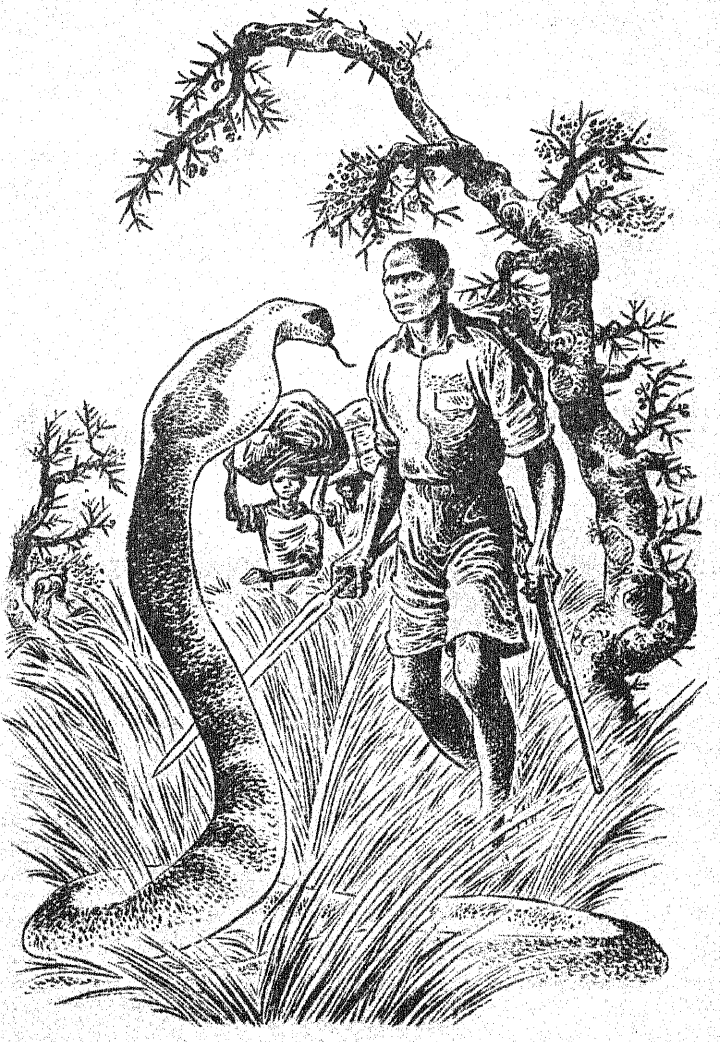
We walked from six that morning until five in the afternoon, when my bearers began to falter. We made camp on the edge of a shallow pan lying in the midst of the dark bush, and while the evening meal was being prepared I climbed a solitary *kopje* of red boulders behind the camp. It rose three hundred feet and had a tremendous view of the Dead Land. Clearly I was standing on the watershed between the Umpafuti and Uhlalingasonki catchment areas. My heart rejoiced, for that meant that nearly half my journey was accomplished. But then I looked east-southeast and immediately qualified my speculation. I saw the broken bushveld country come to an abrupt halt before a mighty barrier. It was my first glimpse of the great forest of Duk-aduk-duk and I remembered the warning of the lieutenant at Fort Emmanuel.

By EIGHT o'clock the next morning we were within two miles of the forest and the nearer we came the less I liked the look of it. An hour later, already in its black shadow, we found the way aggressively blocked by an intricate system of abominable thorns of all kinds, so hooked, barbed and interlocked that no way could be found through it. In vain did we try to break into it with our *pangas* in the hope that once inside we would find clear ground and be able to resume our march to the sea on our bearing. But each time Duk-aduk-duk hurled us back.

Finally I said to Umtumwa, "It's no good. Take up your loads and let's go." The track on which we stood was forked, one prong skirting the forest southwest, the other northeast. I took the latter.

We marched until an hour before sunset, and made camp in a clearing in blackthorn country. We were all tired, thirsty, and discouraged by the day, having done, I reckoned, only seventeen miles, and only nine of them in the right direction.

Suddenly, in the track on the edge of the clearing, a yellow cobra came gliding toward us. It shows how tired my company was that those who saw it made no move. When opposite Umtumwa, it suddenly paused and threw its head swiftly, like a lasso



uncoiling, five feet into the air. The wide hood flared and flashed full out and, with head swaying like a strange somnolent yellow poppy, it regarded Umtumwa intently. My heart stood still, for my old friend was looking at it as if hypnotized. I had my rifle instantly trained on the swaying yellow head, but at that moment it collapsed in the dust and the cobra glided out of view.

"Did you see that, my Bwana? Oh! Did you see it, Bwana?" Umtumwa asked, black dismay in his eyes.

"Aye, Umtumwa, I saw it as I've seen a hundred others, so what of it?" I said, trying to make light of it.

"No! Bwana, no!" he answered. "There is not one single snake in the world like it. Did you see the way it looked at me and only me? I wish I were at Amantazuma now to ask my father's doctor to tell me what it means, and give me the *'mhuti* I need."

His concern was great, but on that note I was forced to leave the camp to look for game and was lucky enough to shoot a fat duiker ram almost at once.

Next morning, I was glad to see that the look of anxiety that the cobra had planted in Umtumwa's eyes was gone. We stepped out fast along the track, but the resentful, watchfully waiting forest kept on throwing us out wherever we tried to enter it. I'm not an unduly fanciful person, but that forest quickly acquired a human character for me. I could almost believe that it was aware of our presence and spying on our progress. When we camped that evening, we still hadn't breached its defenses, though we had walked and probed another twenty-five miles in the wrong direction and used up another of my eight precious days, leaving me only four. I was going to need all the extra hours my good port captain could gain for me by retarding the *Star of Truth,* and I realized the odds were more and more against my succeeding.

All the next day my small company walked steadily farther away from its true objective. We pitched our camp at sundown by a deep blue pool. Taking Tickie with me, I went off in search of meat, and two hundred yards from the pond our track ended abruptly in a vast complex of decayed and crumbling stone walls. Once a considerable city had stood here, and the spirit of its perished people seemed still to move through the darkening

air. As we stood there an owl went up on wings like a moth and another hooted nearby, while on a rubble of stone a large gray giant bustard sat watching us silently.

Then, with relief, I saw a track at right angles to the old, aimed like an arrowhead straight at the dark flank of the forest. "There's our road for tomorrow, Tickie," I said, hoping that it would lead us back to the old path. But I got no further with my thought, for walking slowly down the track toward us was an elderly hippopotamus bull, like a retired, well-to-do and fat old Parsee merchant, enjoying the cool of the evening.

"How would you like some hippopotamus meat, Tickie?" I whispered to him.

"*Auck*, my master, that would be very good!"

Slowly the doomed old gentleman came toward us; he seemed too grotesque to kill, for the hippo is a compound of exaggerations. His head was so big that he nearly toppled over with it, yet his ears were tiny and coral pink as a woman's. His jaw was like a lion trap, yet he was a mere vegetarian and so greedy of green and delicate things that I've known his kind to walk ten miles for a meal of lettuce. By day he would sleep in contented ease in the water, but by night he walked thus abroad, puffing and grunting with the effort of feeding enough air to his vast lungs.

"Forgive me, dear, rare old antique," I whispered, pressed the trigger, and watched him sink down, gently, slowly, deliberate to the last.

There was great rejoicing in camp. Hippopotamus lard is caviar to Africa's indigenous gourmets. It was a happy camp, I thought, until I heard Tickie say to Umtumwa, "Brother of my mother, in that dead place I told you of, just before the master shot, a ghost owl flew up and another called 'who is there?' in the bush."

"I have never known a ghost owl to hoot by daylight," Umtumwa said gravely. "Surely that cannot be good."

The next morning, Sunday, and at best five days before the *Star of Truth's* arrival at the assumed Flamingo Water, we turned into our new track at dawn. It went straight for the darkest shadow in the lofty dark line of trees. As we went deeper into the thick

forest my eyes, accustomed to the dancing shimmer of light without, felt strangely inadequate, and my ears felt as if they had been plugged. I could no longer hear the bearers padding behind me. Depressed by this lack of companionable sound, I called out loud to Said, who was leading the line. His answering *"Ghadre,* Effendi" sounded so faint that I judged him to be far away, but in a few seconds he emerged from behind a tree and I knew he could have been only a few yards off.

I was perplexed how to explain it all until at noon, when the light was a little less feeble, I saw that the trees were covered thickly with a deep, springy moss, festooned with druid lichen, and the earth covered with moss and leaves and a variety of ferns. The great forest of Duk-aduk-duk was so thickly padded and screened with vegetation that sound could not penetrate it.

The next four days were all exactly like the first. From Lady Precious Stream, as we named our first camp in the forest, we averaged about fifteen miles a day. The fourth night's camp I named Umtumwa's Rest, on account of a remark I heard him make to Tickie as they relaxed by the fire: "I who have traveled far and visited many strange places with the master tell you that never will you see anything as good as the smoke at evening coming out of our round huts in the valley of Amantazuma."

I, too, was nearly desperate, for we had another forty-five miles to go, which at the very best would make us a day too late to see the *Star of Truth* arrive.

We left Umtumwa's Rest at dawn in a heavy mist which cleared at about ten, and I saw the forest had gone over into lovely park-like land. What a relief to see the blue of day again! Calling my company together, I explained to them how urgent speed was and demanded that they step out like free men in a noble cause, walking as they'd never walked before.

At dawn the next day our track began to climb and I noticed the vegetation changing to low subtropical bush. My heart beat faster, since I recognized it as the typical coastal covering of the earth in this part of the world. Then, after about two hours' marching, my ears picked up a sound as of a wind coming up fast and wide from horizon to horizon. We all listened to the

sound ebbing and flowing, like the noise of air in a curled shell held to our ears. It was the sea.

"Ekenonya! Ekenonya!" Tickie suddenly shouted, leaping with joy, and Said joined in with a dervish call.

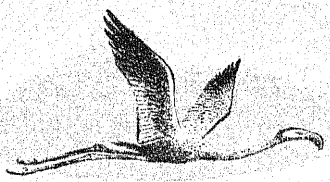
"Quiet, you two, quiet," I reprimanded them. "From now on you must be very careful, for this place may hold many evil men."

They took their places in the line and we walked stealthily on. The track continued to climb steeply until it suddenly leveled out and then began to drop. The mist was just clear of the trees, and as I took the first step down I saw the fire. Yes, suddenly, far down below me, long streaks of vivid, unearthly fire.

I stopped short and passed word down the line for Umtumwa. "Go back with the bearers a hundred yards. Move another hundred to the right of the track and put the whole party under cover as if you were expecting air and ground attack. See that no one makes a sound and wait until I come to join you."

Umtumwa vanished with the bearers and I was alone on the edge of a bluff in a mauve margin of heavy mist. Dear heaven, how dense it was, and how still the air with only the murmur and rustle of the sea! Yet, down below, flickering and trembling and shimmering, there was fire in every chink of the slowly rending mist. I was glimpsing the early morning flame of flamingo wings above the Great Flamingo Water.

Then a sound broke the stillness. Somewhere below me in the mist a powerful ship's pulse was beating, and screws were thrashing. My heart went sick with despair, for that sound was steadily going by me toward the sea. No, no, my heart protested to the sleeping land, you cannot inflict so cruel a blow upon me. We'd rightly and truly followed the spoor, only to arrive too late. Over and over again I came back to the stinging conviction that, had I started working on Joan's intuition of John's survival several years before, I would not be standing there in the mist, a lonely failure. I've known many bitter moments in my life but none more bitter than those on the bluff above the Flamingo Water, for so deeply rooted in my own character did the causes of my failure appear to be that I felt as if I suffered from a self-inflicted wound.



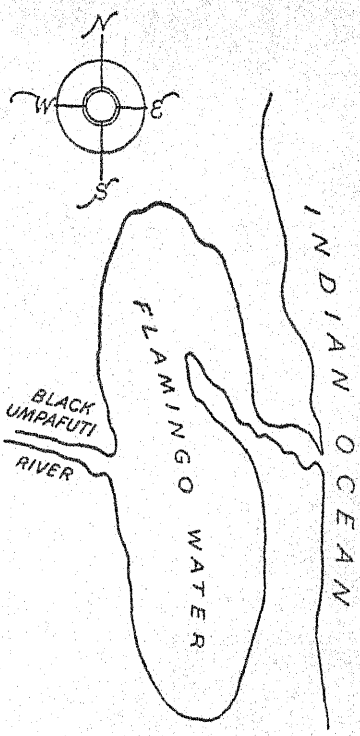
CHAPTER 7

SAT for fully an hour on the edge of the bluff with only the flame of flamingo fire to warm my spirit, but at the end of that time the mist began to lift above the trees and the beauty of the scene then revealed was hardly of this earth.

I looked down on a bay, almost a perfect oval within a ring of hills, with black, smoking jungle coming right down to the gleaming water. Only at the western end was the oval broken, for there a silver river, wide and swollen, cut a swift, clean cleft in the hills. It flowed out to sea so strongly that the ship I had heard was already on the Indian Ocean side of the bay. But what held my eyes was the flame of flamingo fire on the pearly water below, for if there was one bird there were millions. It would need the brush of Fragonard to reproduce the elegance of the birds, drawing the luminous stilts of their long legs like Venetian glass out of the crucible of that fire. And who could do justice to the supple curve of those long sea-foam necks and the grace of their heads? How like Africa all this was! How like the dark mother who seems to have no time for life which is not big and strong, yet all the while is nursing in secret these delicate and elegant birds which once, nearly two thousand years before, drew a king and all his people toward them in a great dream.

With the memory of the dream my courage revived. No, I thought, I will not give up! I'll cast about here for fresh spoor and persevere until the matter is brought to a true end. So I returned to my company, organized a camp well off the track and cunningly camouflaged, and leaving Umtumwa in charge went with Tickie to a bluff across the bay.

Walking with utmost vigilance and speaking in whispers, for the track bore all the marks of recent usage, we reached the mouth of the bay in an hour. I saw at once how well nature had concealed and camouflaged this vast Flamingo Water. The river, instead of



breaking through the hills in one straight cut, had followed through at half a right angle to its course, so that looking inland from the sea one would never discern the bay at all but would see merely a dark gash blocked at the back by a wall of hill. Nor could curious ships come close to observe the gash for, as far as we could see, the river had thrown up enormous shoals of sand in the ocean about a mile from the shore and long breakers were going white over them everywhere. Behind us the bay was filled only with that lovely shimmer of flamingos, and about a mile beyond the silver river entrance at our backs a column of blue smoke rose straight up into the air.

I was about to turn my glasses on it when Tickie cried, "Look, Bwana, more smoke — on the sea!" I swung round, and to my amazement there were twin columns of smoke rising up from the ocean to the south. My heart gave a bound.

Our excitement in the next hour was intense. We watched one smoke column pass the other as both came fast up the coast toward us. Long before they came abreast of us I recognized the turned-up nose of the *Star of Truth* going full out. Behind her came a smaller vessel that I'd never seen before. The color of her smoke showed that she burned wood, and I'd no doubt that she was a base ship, presumably the one I had heard going out in the morning! At about four o'clock both ships passed underneath us. I had to place a warning hand on Tickie's leg, for he gave a startled gasp when he saw, strolling about the *Star of Truth's*



deck, seventeen of his countrymen.

So close was the *Star of Truth* that I read her Baltic name on the bow, *Svensdy Pravdy,* as well as that of her bulldog follower, *Inyati,* the Lindelbaum ship presumably lost in a cyclone. The *Star of Truth* dropped her anchors with a rattle that resounded from hill to hill and I saw a lookout on her foretop. Then the *Inyati* came alongside and grappled herself to the *Star of Truth,* whose derricks fore and aft began dropping the first bundles of cargo onto the smaller ship's deck.

"Come, Tickie," I said. "At last we have real work to do."

When I told Umtumwa the news I was pleased to see how much it cheered him. He agreed that the trail from now on would be much more exacting and that if we were to pursue it undetected we'd have to reduce our numbers. So I called the bearers, thanked them for what they'd done and told them that in the morning they could return to Fort Emmanuel. I appointed Said their leader. I gave him a gun and fifty rounds and a



letter to the Governor emphasizing how well they all had earned their pardons, asking him to see that they received medical treatment if necessary and to pay each of them twenty pounds and his fare to his home. Said accepted the mission reluctantly, saying he would prefer to stay with us, but as he was the only reliable shot in the party I ordered him to go.

That evening I was startled to hear, far away yet quite distinctly, the *Star of Truth's* loudspeakers broadcasting music to her crew. It felt unreal to be lying there in the bush, listening to a radio, hearing a lion roar to a fast Tartar beat.

At dawn I set the bearers marching with "Go in happiness," the ancient African farewell. Said placed himself at the end of the line, saying, "See, Effendi, I, too, walk where the trouble collects!"

"Good, Said," I answered. "I'd assume the bush ahead was full of evil men until I was well into the forest of Duk-aduk-duk."

"I shall not fail to be careful," he responded, "for I hope to serve with you again one day."

When they had gone, I set off alone to explore the other fork in the track leading west where I'd seen blue wood smoke the evening before. Umtumwa and Tickie were removing traces of our old camp, and getting ready to move on my return.

"Whatever happens, Umtumwa," I told him, "don't let anyone or anything surprise you into shooting. One shot in this country and we're as surely exposed as if we'd been seen."

"Agreed, Bwana. I shall not be so foolish," he answered with so much of his old firm spirit that again I was reassured.

Down by the water the air was loud with the noise of the *Star of Truth's* winches busily discharging her mysterious cargo, but as I went fast up a broad track to the west this sound, too, faded. Well used as the track obviously was, at this hour of the morning it was empty and silent. At one point, two miles from camp, I found that a track equally broad had been newly made as if meant to be a short cut to the path which had brought us to the bay. I didn't like the look of that and determined to inspect it on my return.

An hour and a half later I heard the steady beat of a Diesel

engine ahead and the confused murmur of many voices. I went on with redoubled caution until the smell of cooking warned me I was dangerously near a camp. At once I stepped out of the track and crawled forward to the edge of a man-made clearing.

The mist was beginning to thin and visibility was helped by electric lights which burned by the many thatched shelters before me. The clearing was enormous but one thing struck me immediately: the order and cunning of the mind that had designed it. Its camouflage was perfect and no casual plane would ever have detected it from above. I crawled on until I came opposite what appeared to be a hospital, for I observed an orderly, syringe in hand, standing at a table and quickly inoculating a long line of 'Takwena bearers. They were magnificent men, tall and strong. To the left other men were coming out of the mist from the direction of the water carrying heavy wooden boxes in hammocks slung between their broad shoulders. The whole scene impressed me profoundly with its air of efficient and sinister purposefulness.

I lay there for a quarter of an hour, but in that short space of time I saw enough rifles, machine guns, mortars, ammunition and explosives go by to equip two companies of infantry. And that was really all I needed to know, for the moment, of the *Star of Truth's* business. The urgent thing left to discover was the destination of this cargo. Surely I had only to follow the footsteps of those muscular 'Takwena who were being inoculated before going on a long journey, and they would lead me to it.

I was just about to crawl back into the bush when, deep from the heavy folds of the mist, came a burst of well-controlled automatic rifle fire. It lasted about half a minute, then ceased as abruptly as it had begun, to be followed by a few single shots at irregular intervals. Obviously wounded targets were being finished off with single shots. Then a resounding shout of command went up, and out of the mist came eight white men with set, square-jawed faces and Tartar eyes. They had on gray field uniforms and ran with a lumbering gait as if their boots were too heavy for them. They disappeared straight down the track along which I had just come. So close were they to me that I could have tripped them up with the point of my rifle.

Almost sick with dismay, I started back for my camp. It was now obvious to me that whenever a ship was in port no chances were taken of anyone's stumbling on the vital secret, so patrols were arranged at all entrances and exits to this secluded water. I realized also what amazing good luck I had had, for I must have reached the Flamingo Water just before the first patrols were posted. I prayed that my homeward-bound bearers had been equally lucky and that the outburst of automatic fire had not meant that they had run into an armed party of 'Takwena scouts. The memory of those redeemed criminal faces on the long trail through the Dead Land and the dread forest was still fresh in me, and at the thought of their peril my spirit hardened against the *Star of Truth* as it never had before.

And there was an added danger. Said was carrying my letter to the Governor. The master of the *Star of Truth* would have been warned of me by Harkov. One glance at that letter and my name at the foot of it, and the most desperate manhunt this land had ever witnessed would be let loose. And if the news of my presence here got through to Lindelbaum and Harkov, what action might they not adopt? I could see nothing but increasing peril for all who were connected with me, for Joan and Bill at Petit' France, for Oom Pieter and for John Sandysse, not to speak of the probable tragic precipitation of the whole 'Takwena plot.

I was so absorbed with speculation of this kind that I wouldn't be here to tell this story if it were not for a nut-brown button quail, which came fast down the track with a clockwork whirring of wings, so preoccupied with fear that it very nearly crashed into my shoulder before it saw me and swerved into the bush.

I stood silent and still behind a blackthorn bush at the side of the track, my heart beating loudly in my ears. The sound of the soft tread of a naked foot on the track ahead came through the mist, and a 'Takwena scout came into view. He was following my faint spoor of the morning with the eye of an expert. A knobbed wooden cudgel in his left hand, a long war spear held ready in front of him, he was coming fast to the place where I had abruptly left the track some minutes before.

I drew my knife from its sheath and sank, like a hurdler, into

position. I reckoned the paces that now separated him from me: six, five, four, three, two more steps — I was keyed up and ready to jump when, about half a mile away, on the new fork of the track behind me, came another burst of rifle fire.

The 'Takwena apparently assumed that the fire ahead of him was directed at the man whose spoor he was following. He sprang forward and disappeared into the mist with a long-distance runner's stride. I stepped quickly back into the track and went up it again but with far greater care than before. Seven times I was forced to leave it and hide in the bush while 'Takwena scouts, their spears at the ready, strode by in intent silence. If there were eight of them in this one small sector, how many were there in all?

By the time I reached the well-concealed site of our camp, a moth-winged rain was falling. The clearing was empty, and so well had Tickie and Umtumwa done their work that no sign of previous habitation was discernible. But where had they gone? I dared not call out since one of those silent-footed 'Takwena scouts might be lurking in the mist only a few yards away. So I went under cover round the edge of the clearing, searching for the mark I was certain Umtumwa would have left for me. I found it soon enough, and my heart nearly stood still, for there by an acacia tree were large clots of blood so fresh that they flared on the ground like newly fallen poinsettia leaves. All round them the bush was torn, the earth trampled and deeply marked.

A gasp came from the bush to my left. "Ah, Bwana! *Ekenonya.*"

There was Tickie, camouflaged in the bush three yards away, standing like a veteran jungle fighter with my gun trained on me. I stared into his eyes; they were no longer the eyes of a boy, but rather of a man who has accomplished the transition into maturity in one painful and perilous encounter with death.

"What happened, Tickie?" I asked in a desperate whisper.

"Prepare to string the beads, Bwana!" Tickie said, and there was no need for him to say more. This is how the 'Takwena announce news of death, with the rich symbolism of their speech. "Get ready to weep tears of sorrow as bright as beads, like the bright beads you string to wear round your throat at the burial."

"Where is he, Tickie?" I asked.

He took me fifty yards deeper into the bush, and there, propped up against a tree, massive head on his chest, was Umtumwa. His jungle-green bush shirt was dark with blood. Nearby, on the ground, was the long body of a 'Takwena scout.

"How did it happen?" I asked, wishing that the ice which gripped my heart would crack and I could weep.

Tickie had gone to fetch water, he told me, and on his return he had found Umtumwa fighting grimly hand to hand with a tall 'Takwena scout. Here Tickie kicked savagely at the scout's corpse, sobbing, "Oh! What an evil man, Bwana; what an evil deed for 'Takwena to do to 'Takwena! He came to the edge of the camp where Umtumwa had him covered with his rifle, stuck his spear in the earth as the 'Takwena do when they come in peace, and stepped forward, hands out empty before him. At once Umtumwa put his gun down and stepped forward also. But he had not walked a yard when this thing of evil — " again Tickie kicked the corpse " — pulled his spear out of the earth and threw it at Umtumwa, hitting him above the heart."

Umtumwa had stumbled with the force of it but, recovering quickly, had pulled out the spear and gone for his attacker. He was fatally wounded, however, and would have lost the battle if Tickie had not come back just then and broken the scout's neck with the butt of the rifle.

Umtumwa's last words to Tickie were, "Tell the master I could have used my rifle but I promised I would not shoot. Tell him I thank him for having been a brother to me and say before nightfall I shall be with Xilixowe and speak with him of the evil his people are planning by his Great Flamingo Water."

With blurred eyes I knelt beside Umtumwa. I called on Tickie to help, and we lifted him up and buried him in an ant-bear hole dug deep in the red earth of Africa, at the foot of a young baobab tree. Then we stripped the 'Takwena scout of his war beads and finery and, in spite of Tickie's protest, we buried him in a hole nearby. I had seen too much of the dark forces that invade the hearts of simple, trusting men to hold his deed against him.

Before we left I stood, hat in hand, beside Umtumwa's grave and silently recited "The Lord is my shepherd," and then, on an

impulse, I pulled up one of the tall decorative grasses which grew round the hole and put it in my rucksack. As a result there is today a new species added to the list of known grasses in the world: *Setara Umtumwaensis*. I take comfort from the thought that there is in Africa something alive and continually renewed which bears his name as it adds its own note of music to the wind.

TICKIE AND I tried as best we could to remove the traces of our brief occupation in the wood, but I knew that an enemy as suspicious as ours would ultimately see through all camouflage. Only time, the wind and the rain could really wipe out our spoor. When we had finished our task, I climbed a tree until I had a clear view on one side of the fiery water and on the other of the dark bush. Where the coastal bush ended and the plains began, the air was strangely agitated with birds. I could not doubt that they marked out the movement of a long line of trackers coming toward us, as surely as floating corks sketch the outline of the closing net deep beneath the surface of the sea. Our only hope was to lie up near at hand so that the life of the bush around us could resume its usual rhythm before the trackers reached it.

One of the characteristic features of the bush we were in was its colonies of a thorn tree that the 'Takwena call "hook, claw and stab." These trees form small, tight clusters on mounds of earth with long yellow grasses round about them. The branches start about six feet from the ground but fall so low that they sweep the ground bare beneath them. From without there is not a chink in their armor of thorn and leaves. They are, therefore, ideal shelter, as leopard, cheetah and python well know. Tickie and I concealed ourselves beneath one of these trees. We lay flat on our stomachs, Tickie facing one way, I the other, our bodies propped on our elbows, eyes level with the tops of the nearest grass, our guns cocked and ready, our knives unsheathed.

To this day I don't know how I got through those long hours under cover save that I had a memory which was for me like an anchorage in a storm — the moment when my eyes first met Joan's on the day of François de Beauvilliers' funeral. That memory protected me and kept me whole.

We lay so still that the birds came to collect yellow berries round our heads and picked away among ferns at our feet. Then at about three in the afternoon I noticed that the birds were increasing and were massing in the bigger trees. At this hour of the day, this was rare enough to make our nerves tingle. These prudent little creatures were retreating in our direction.

"Bwana!" Tickie whispered softly. "People! Many people, searching the path you took this morning."

"I know, Tickie." As if in answer to a prayer, a deep rumble of thunder rolled across the Flamingo Water.

"Tickie," I said quietly, "we'll lie here until they find us. Then we'll shoot to kill. I'll press you like this when I want us to shoot. . . ." I dug my elbow into the calf next to me. "We'll empty our magazines fast into them so they'll pause until someone comes to take them in command again. In that moment you and I will slip out of cover. All you have to do then is to follow me. If I'm killed or wounded, don't linger with me. You must get back to Fort Emmanuel, for the lives of many people and the safety of Umangoni depend upon it. There you must get the lieutenant to telegraph for Bwana 'Ndabaxosikas (Oom Pieter's name among Africans) to come to you so that you can tell him all."

I had hardly spoken when a tan-colored duiker doe dived into view over a bush in front of me and loped by without a backward glance. Hard behind, a steenbok ram bounded lightly past and then three large turkey buzzards, with yellow heads and fat bodies, came flying low over the treetops. To my joy one alighted on the top of the tree next to ours as if to complete our camouflage.

I knew then that the climax of our day was close at hand. Tickie tapped a warning against my side: "Bwana, I think a man has just crawled on his stomach into the grass fifty paces in front of me."

"Don't take your eyes off that place," I whispered. "If he moves again, warn me."

I had barely finished speaking when a sharp flash of lightning cut through the sky with a flare of mandarin yellow. Hard by, the bush on the far edge of the grass burst open like a paper hoop and five wart hogs, their tusks curled like the mustaches of a

Victorian villain, came briskly past us to vanish on the other side.

They're coming up faster than I expected, I said to myself, and then, from the site of our old camp, a whistle went up, loud, clear and exultant. I knew the sound only too well, for I had used it often as a boy to call the attention of our dogs to quarry which had suddenly broken cover. Far and wide it was answered by urgent whistles and then the whole bush broke into the sound of men crashing through it without effort at disguise.

They poured past us, their backs to me, racing for the camp, their long spears at the ready. They were so close that I could hear their breathing, yet they didn't see us because they were so intent on that sharp, impetuous summons from our old camp.

As the last of them went by, I heard the crunch of jackboots and out of cover broke my eight White Mongol guards of the early morning. I thought them a sullen, oxlike bunch, their gray field uniforms ripped in a dozen places, sweat staining their heavy tunics. Behind them came an officer and the lean, grim-faced 'Takwena I had seen aboard the *Star of Truth* at Port Natal, the mark of royalty upon his cheeks. When they reached the site of our old camp an intense silence fell. Then a drop of rain hit a twig beside me, splintering like a bubble of delicate glass. Behind the silenced camp, the rain threw itself upon the Flamingo Water, driving fast toward us with a swish of its long white pleated skirts and the noise of a great wind. With it came searing flashes of quick forked lightning and rolling thunder.

Our immediate battle was over. Not only had the impetuous scouts trampled over our faint traces, but this storm would remove forever our spoor from the bush. Our enemies evidently came to the conclusion that it was too late to continue their search, for their voices rose in the oldest 'Takwena chant I know.

Yes! Oh! Yes. Yes. Yes!
We go one of the three ways:
The three ways a man and his brothers go:
The way to battle in the breaking morning,
The way from victory in the red of evening,
The way of dust to the last sleep at nightfall,

By the Great Flamingo Water;
Guess, oh guess, guess, guess:
You who hear me.
Which of the three ways do we go?

At the end of a long roll of thunder the reply came from the well of the past, its resonance a startling revelation of the numbers of 'Takwena gathered in the bush.

Oh! How can you ask the way of our going;
How can you wonder at the measure of our feet,
When look, the blood on our spears is warm
And the last of our enemies with the day is dead?
Aye: look. We go the way from victory,
Home in the evening;
We go to our cattle and our kraals and our women
by the fire
In the blue of Umangoni.

I've heard this chant on many occasions. Wherever the men of Umangoni gather, it is sung. It became fainter as the singers withdrew and I said in immense relief, "Well, that's that, Tickie. We can get ready to go now."

"Hush, Bwana!" he whispered. "He is still there."

I realized that momentarily I'd forgotten the man I'd told Tickie to watch. Now through the silver streaks of rain I saw the yellow grass part at the edge of a cluster. Something or someone was coming straight toward us. Lips to Tickie's ear, I said, "One shot will fetch them all back. But keep him covered."

The minutes that followed seemed unbearably long. Slowly, the movement came to within ten yards of us. A dark shadow was pulling itself slowly upright in the grass, looking anxiously about with a gun at the ready in its hands.

"Said!" I called out joyfully, as loudly as I dared. "Look! It is I, your Effendi, and Tickie!"

"Allah be praised!" It was more like a sigh of relief than a cry. "Truly, Allah is great. But where is Umtumwa?"

"Where are your bearers?" I asked him, not liking to answer his question.

"Dead, all dead, Effendi," he answered, his voice stark with tragedy. "Killed by those you have just seen here. But Umtumwa?"

"Is it necessary to ask then? He, too, is dead, also killed by one of those." Said looked at me with bewildered misery. "I thank Allah for preserving you," I told him. "He has obviously sent you to take Umtumwa's place. Come, let us find better shelter against the storm and you can tell us how you escaped."

There was, he explained later, not much to tell. About an hour and a half after leaving us his party had been ambushed; he was the only survivor. His progress toward us had been a nightmare.

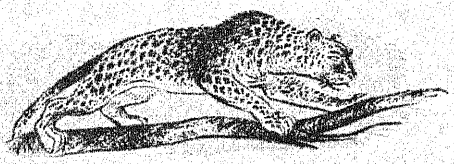
"But my letter to the Governor, Said? What's become of that?"

"Here, Effendi. I have it safely here," he replied, putting his hand on the breast pocket of his ancient tunic.

"Good," I said, profoundly thankful that my presence here was still hidden from my enemies. "You've done well, Said."

He gave me the letter with a hand trembling with fatigue and cold. I noticed that Tickie, too, was shivering. Putting my hand on his shoulder I said, "Take Said and collect the loads; Umtumwa's also. I'll start a fire to make tea and cook some porridge while we have this storm to hide the smoke. When we've eaten we, too, shall go one of three ways. And guess, oh, my brother, which of the three ways we'll go!"

Night settled, and the rain became finer. When the light of the first great star came to walk the strands of cloud, I roused Said and Tickie and told them to take up their loads and follow me.



CHAPTER 8

HAD GIVEN a good deal of thought to our line of action and finally decided to double back on our trail toward the forest of Duk-aduk-duk only until we reached a game track which would lead us into the interior and far behind the enemy's base camp at the

Flamingo Water. I had no doubt I should find suitable trails; the only difficulty was to find one in time. It was vital to do so before dawn. As long as it was dark I knew we were reasonably safe. Africans don't usually leave their fires and shelter after nightfall, and rarely venture into the bush by night. But at the first light of dawn I expected the track to be alive with 'Takwena scouts.

We walked without stop for over seven hours and I reasoned we must have come at least twenty miles from the Flamingo Water. It was four thirty, an hour before dawn, and I had now to find a place where we could lie up for the day. I determined to turn into the first good game track which crossed our path.

I found one within a few minutes on the side of a broad vlei, but I feared we might leave marks on the wet grass which would not escape the eyes of expert trackers. So I went down into the hollow of the vlei and found a dark water channel between the reeds. Much to the disgust of the others, I led them down the center of this channel, walking up to our knees and sometimes even up to our armpits in water. After about a mile I abandoned it for another game track and kept on it until eight in the morning, when we camped under a magnificent wild fig tree.

When we woke up, thunder and rain were again coming toward us from the sea. "We're going to walk in the storm this evening," I told Tickie and Said, "and walk until there's no more rain to wash out our spoor behind us."

The distance from our camp site to the formidable Mountains of the Night which line the frontier of Umangoni was roughly three hundred miles on my map. I reckoned that I'd have to add another hundred miles to that distance as we would have to twist in and out of the vleis, river beds, valleys and ravines, not to mention detours to avoid our enemies. If we averaged twenty miles a day, we should be able to do the journey in twenty days.

Once we had crossed the frontier into Umangoni, heaven alone knew where the trail would lead us. It was exactly three weeks and a day since the 'Takwena war cry *"Mattalahta Buka"* had brought me rushing out of Petit' France with Umtumwa in close support. In that time I had learned surely that the Lindelbaum organization was engaged in setting up secret military installa-

tions; I suspected that they were making evil use of the 'Takwena by means of a "great dream" of their own invention. And somewhere in all this John Sandysse was involved. I knew it was all as urgent as it could possibly be. But I knew also, from what I had heard outside Lindelbaum's "palace" at Beckett's Hill, that nothing irrevocable would be done until the latest cargo and the instructions carried by the *Star of Truth* had been delivered to Umangoni; and though the instructions might already be on their way, the cargo was still far from discharged. We were no longer casting about entirely in the dark. By now Oom Pieter would be on the trail of the "great dream" in Umangoni. And that was the heart of the matter. I was dealing with the mere mechanics of the conspiracy; the dream would be the living center.

During our long march upcountry, we ran a continuous gantlet of danger. If it had not been for the rain which nightly washed our tracks away, I doubt if we should ever have got out of the coastal area alive. To our dismay we found everywhere an elaborate network of well-used tracks fanning inland from the enemy's base to depots along the river. From early morning until late evening these tracks were crowded with 'Takwena traffic: large parties going out to hunt for food and to collect wood. Each party was organized so that every seventh man carried a rifle and at the head of every twenty-first man went two more, one armed with a light machine gun and the other carrying ammunition and a submachine pistol. These men were not ordinary, unskilled African porters but were trained and organized into military sections, platoons and companies. They had only to shed their loads and collect their arms from among the huge supplies I saw going ashore by the Flamingo Water to be ready to fight as disciplined infantry.

They had clearly been forbidden to cut wood, which would have indicated to anyone flying over the land that it was inhabited. They collected fallen timber. And not once did we hear them use a rifle on game. All the hunting was done with spears, bows and arrows, and snares. These snares had their attractions for us, for we raided them at first light of day and so had enough to eat.

Unfortunately, the deeper we went inland, the later and the

shorter became our friends the afternoon storms. We were forced to go closer to the river and to our enemy, in order to find water.

Sixteen days after leaving the Great Flamingo Water, an hour before dawn, we found a hollow cream-of-tartar tree not fifty yards from the enemy's track. I saw Tickie and Said safely into it and then went some yards back, where I climbed a tall acacia which gave me a clear view of the surrounding area. There we waited and watched.

A thousand men with heavy loads on their heads went by that morning, and a thousand men returned empty-handed in the evening — and not a white face among them. The seventeen 'Takwena we had seen on the deck of the ship, and he with the royal markings on his face among them, went by at a dogtrot as if determined to make up for lost time. Three of them carried letters in large white envelopes — like government envelopes — stuck in forked sticks as is the 'Takwena custom. The fatal instructions, I thought immediately.

We came down from our lookouts at sunset. "Look, Tickie," I said, "from what we know of the enemy he's not likely to use this road except by day. I want to be in Umangoni as soon as those letters. What about using this track at night?"

"I have been thinking that thought, Bwana," he answered.

By ten o'clock we were on the track, Tickie in the role of a 'Takwena scout, war spear at the ready, a hundred yards ahead.

We lay up for the next day in the shade of a blue *krans,* or cliff. When I climbed to the top of the *krans* to have a look at the country I noticed in the west, above the gleaming coils of the bush, a deep purple shadow, like a bank of thundercloud, but it was too solid, too steep, too purple to be that.

"Tickie! Said! Quick!" I called.

Rifles in hand, they came scrambling up a crack in the *krans,* alarm in their faces.

"Look!" I pointed to the west. "The frontier. The Mountains of the Night, and the sun going down over Umangoni!"

"Allah be praised!" Said said solemnly.

Tickie spat on the palm of his right hand and held it high above his head in the royal 'Takwena salute to the sun.

AT DAWN two days later we were standing on an upland slope bare of vegetation except for long green-gold grass. The nearest cover was about a mile away, where an infiltration of rain forest ran a thick black seam in one of the many volcanic pleats in the outskirts of the mountains. It was the obvious cover to make for, but how? We could not move across the virgin grass without leaving a track any amateur could follow, and the enemy was closer to us and in greater force than he had yet been since we left the Flamingo Water. Moreover, he was already on the move. Below us in the river basin we heard the grave, measured song of a thousand or more 'Takwena setting out on a march. And thousands of others would be coming in at nightfall.

It was light enough to see the noble heads of a troop of eland watching us and listening to the far barbaric singing with intense alertness. That finishes it, I thought. The hunters will be up here in no time, and I was on the point of deciding we had better get back into the bush below before it was too late, when I noticed a well-worn track coming out of the side of the watercourse up which we had climbed in the dark. So up and along it we sped. The trail led us over the crest of a deep fold into a dark belt of rain forest which provided us with well-nigh perfect cover.

I had an uneasy rest, thinking I heard faint voices and bells. At first I was too tired to be bothered, but as the day wore on I became more and more restless. At last I took my gun and glasses and told Said I was going to follow the fold to its highest point.

Climbing through the tangled, pathless belt of rain forest, I heard again those far-off voices and bells which had pursued me in my sleep. I climbed with redoubled caution to the summit.

Coming up behind a big loose boulder, I saw a very old and very big baboon sitting with his back to me, his broad shoulders rounded, his head well tucked in and a long, oddly pedagogic finger nervously scratching his head. He was obviously the look-out for some highland clan foraging for scorpions and tubers; but to me he looked rather like a natural professor of geology surveying material for a lecture. "Hallo, Adonis," I whispered, using the name my countrymen gave his kind.

He whipped round and stared at me paralyzed, and I looked

into the wisest and most experienced hazel eyes I've ever seen in a baboon's face. Then the darkness of fear came up like night in his ancient eyes. He blinked, his brow became wrinkled and his lips began to tremble hysterically. Suddenly he turned a prodigious undignified somersault backward, revealing a bare unacademic behind, and vanished into space below.

I took over his eminent chair of study among the boulders. On the long slopes barely two miles away I saw many cattle, sheep and goats herded by young boys who called to their animals or one another in clear, girllike voices. Occasionally, the voices were joined by a sparkle of ice-flake sound from bells worn by some leading goat or favorite humpback cow. Beyond the cattle, two or three miles distant, were round huts, neat cattle kraals, stockaded maize, millet and pumpkin fields.

I turned sharply and set my glasses on the way we had come in the breaking morning. A long line of hunters and their bearers, carrying loads on their heads, were disappearing one by one down the very crack in the wall we had used.

Clearly, with all this going on, the cattle owners could not fail to be aware of our enemy's presence, but the fact that they kept themselves and their cattle well away from their greatest natural water source suggested that they could not be on friendly terms. When the last of the hunters disappeared down the wall of the river basin, a burly 'Takwena sentinel was left there leaning on his spear, staring out across the empty slope to the north.

I studied the course of the river basin on its way down from the Mountains of the Night for evidence of a way out of it, natural or man-made, but I could find nothing. On my return I told Tickie and Said what I had seen, and my conclusion that it would be fatal for us to go back to the overpopulated river.

"There is only one thing we can do," I said. "And only you, Tickie, can do it. You must put on your war finery and pretend to be one of the enemy. We'll take you down to the track we left this morning and you must follow it to the nearest of the kraals of which I've just spoken. Tell them you are a hunter who's been on the trail of a wounded eland all afternoon and that you didn't notice how far the day had gone until it was


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too late to get back to your camp by the river. Ask them for shelter and food. They cannot, if they are true 'Takwena, refuse you. Find out what they know about the enemy, and where the track in the river basin goes. What other ways are there from here to Umangoni? Which is the shortest in time? Which do they use themselves? Then, the moment the morning star steps out of the bush, tell them you must be on your way, like someone who fears punishment if he does not return to his camp at once. If you're not back by morning, Said and I will set out to look for you."

Poor Tickie. He was as brave as the bravest I've ever known, but the prospect of shutting himself up for a night in the kraals of strange, possibly hostile people and matching himself in duplicity against the experienced grayheads who would be produced to cross-examine him was as little to his liking as to mine. For one moment he looked at me, his wide, dark eyes dull with dismay. Then slowly he got up and fetched his spear.

It was a terribly long night for me. Just before dawn I got up and climbed slowly back toward the summit. As the light spread I kept a careful watch for Tickie; he should have been halfway along the track by now if all were well. The fever of apprehension within me was running high when I finally saw him. He was running, his war spear trailing in his left hand, and in the other hand he swung a bundle.

Yes, Tickie said when we were back in camp, undoing his bundle to hand us sugar-sweet white maize cobs, roasted that morning in the coals by his hosts, it had all been very easy. He spoke in a boyishly boastful manner designed more to disguise his relief than to display pride in his achievement. The people, it is true, were hostile at first, but even more frightened than hostile.

Part of their fear was that he had been sent to demand food or cattle. He gathered that from time to time our enemies came out of the river basin and requisitioned food in quantities which such a small community could ill afford. It is true they were paid well in money, but what good was money in so remote a place? When Tickie's hosts discovered that he demanded nothing more than a night's shelter, their relief was great. But fear, a real,

permanent fear, remained like night at the back of their eyes. Tickie had had no idea what it all meant until, late at night, pretending to be asleep, he had heard whispers of speculation and reminiscence around him. He gathered that the whole of the river basin had been placed under a powerful *'Mwatagati,* a witch doctor's tabu, when two winters ago a messenger had come to these people from the Umbombulimo.

"The Umbombulimo!" I exclaimed, deeply perturbed. For the Umbombulimo was the chief witch doctor of the 'Takwena, and the principal Keeper of the People's Memory. He was the one source of authority which would never be suspected of foreign corruption. If he was a party to this conspiracy, then the effect went beyond my imagination.

Tickie nodded, and said the Umbombulimo's messenger had administered to all the people in the kraals the most sacred of 'Takwena oaths. He made them swear in the name of Xilixowe that they would remove all their cattle from the river basin and never on any pretext enter the Forbidden Area until told by the Umbombulimo that they were released from their oath.

"If they did not obey, Bwana," Tickie went on, "they and their cattle would die of disease in one season. If some strayed by accident down to the river, they would be instantly eaten by Ungungqu Kubantwana." Tickie's voice trembled at mention of "the all devourer," a supernatural female being in whom the 'Takwena believe implicitly. A cold shiver seemed to go through him as if he realized that, though he himself had sworn no oath, he had been a trespasser on forbidden earth. "And, Bwana, already one goat, one heifer, one *umfaan* and one curious *'ntombizan* (a young woman of standing) have been devoured, and that is not all, Bwana. The feather has been shown to these people and already one wise old father has gone for news of its meaning."

"Did you find out about the roads?" I asked.

"Aye. They said what a pity the road by the river was tabu, as it led straight to the ancient meeting place of the Amangtakwena, whereas the road the old father now had to walk would be cold and difficult. It goes right over the top of the mountains."

"Do you know where this track starts?" I asked.

"Two thousand paces from the edge of this fold. I saw the place. But that is not all, Bwana . . . the oath these people have taken commands them to tell the men by the river when strangers appear in their district."

"How can they, if they're not allowed to come near the river?"

"By sending up a long arm and hand of smoke. Seeing that smoke, someone will come from the river to ask the meaning of it. And, Bwana, one old father wanted them to send up the sign of the smoke to report my visit. But the others had heard me speak of the river as one who had been there, and told him it was a waste of time to light the signal."

"I praise you and I thank you, Tickie," I said.

His tired eyes lit up with pleasure at the praise.

That night the moon was only three days from full, so we stepped out fast, taking advantage of its help. Tickie's news was an ominous spur. It proved to me that the Umbombulimo, the spiritual leader of the 'Takwena people, was party to the schemes of Harkov and Lindelbaum.

A yellow dawn caught us making our way along the trough between two waves of the stormiest mountains I've ever seen in Africa. As the day advanced, we had to leave the track and find cover among the boulders. I climbed to the nearest crest and had a quick look round. And then — and my heart missed a beat as I saw it — some miles back, from the top of the hill, a long arm of smoke with hand outstretched lifted high into the sky.

For a moment I was tempted to continue immediately across this seemingly empty land. But I was restrained by the knowledge that, vast and empty as Africa looks to the European, there is always by day some keen human eye on almost every part of it. All the enemy knew now was that strangers had come out of the river area at night and that the strangers, judging by Tickie's visit to the kraal, were 'Takwena. But should a rumor reach him that a European had been seen snooping about, he would come at us from every side. No, there was nothing to do but to take the rest which we needed for the night ahead.

When it was truly dark, I woke the others, and we continued to climb until, just before morning, we reached the roof of this

remote African world, the climax of our road over the tumbled Mountains of the Night. Confident now of being able to evade the enemy, I was preparing to settle in for the day when rifle shots rang out sharply. I quickly joined Said at the sentry post he had taken up in a fringe of trees, and for an hour we stayed there, trying to make out the meaning of the constant shooting. Had my grim-faced 'Takwena royalty, last seen dogtrotting up the track by the river, really beaten me to it, delivered his orders and joined the supreme conspirators in launching the revolution? The noise was voluminous enough for a small battle, but too static, too regular. I realized at last that it must be firing practice.

"It means that we've nothing immediate to fear from the shooting," I told Said. "But we are so close to armed people that I ask you to keep a careful watch."

I went back to Tickie, and slept until just after six. As I awoke, I was dimly conscious of a memory tugging for recognition in my sleepy mind. The memory was connected with the name "Sydcup," and the only Sydcup I could think of was Regimental Sergeant Major George Henry Sydcup, who had fought with John and me in Burma.... Yet I knew this was not the right association, for he had died a gallant death. Somewhere there was another Sydcup in my past.... And instantly I saw again Lindelbaum's face at "Higher Than the Trees" as he listened to Harkov imploring him to put their plan into operation and to instruct someone called Sydcup accordingly.

How strange that I should think of it now. Perhaps the shooting was responsible? Perhaps this was where Mr. Sydcup had his headquarters? Perhaps here was another instance of my little Chinese general's "great togethernesses."

I opened my eyes and saw the huge redwood trees around me shining in the light of sunset. As always when I see something truly beautiful, my mind turned on its central thought of Joan, while my heart wondered whether she would ever know how far and wide I'd traveled with my vision of her.

Almost simultaneously a dark shadow loomed up, and Tickie whispered, "Quick, Bwana! More 'Takwena!"

I followed him to his post. A mile away at the head of the valley,

riding one after another up to the crest, went seven 'Takwena on the tough, sure-footed mountain ponies for which the highlands of Umangoni are famous. The men's blood-red tribal blankets, edged with black wool, were clasped tightly across their chests and their silhouettes were those of weary, sagging warriors giving the ponies their heads at the end of a long day in the saddle. The barrel of a rifle stuck out clearly above each red shoulder.

"Tickie," I said grimly, "you, Said and I are going to find out what goes on behind that noble valley head."

Soon after eight, we were crawling through long grass toward the crown of our valley, solemn under the moon. It's a moment I'll always remember, both because of its beauty and for the change in my spirit which accompanied it. Ever since leaving the Flamingo Water, I had been forced to do many negative things: to hide, to talk always in whispers, to try to sleep by day and to slink past the enemy at night. Now, however, I felt as if I were setting out to do the first of a series of positive things to the enemy. The thought stirred my blood.

At this moment Tickie touched me on the shoulder, whispering with an odd tremble in his throat, "Oh! Do you hear, Bwana?"

And indeed I heard. From behind the crest came the sound of 'Takwena singing the songs men sing when they are out on some mission far away from their women and their cattle. There was no gaiety in the sound; it was just full of everlasting nostalgia.

We crawled on, and soon we all three lay on the far edge of the valley's head. None of us had imagined anything on the scale of what we now saw. We looked straight down on an immense but shallow basin under some of the highest mountains in Umangoni. The basin was perhaps four or five miles in diameter, a sheet of burnished water in the center of it. Toward the south, a yellow serpent river detached itself from the livid sheet and wriggled away into the east, where it disappeared into a dark gash in the side of the mountain. Could this be the source and head of the river we had followed from the Flamingo Water? I could hardly doubt it, particularly as I now saw a very large military camp pitched with textbook precision between us and the river.

The first lines of tents were drawn up on the banks of the river itself. The last of the lines ended not a mile from where we stood. Each set of tents had its own open space, lighted by a Gothic spire of fire. Round each fire, a chorus of deep 'Takwena voices made the music we had heard.

I found the scene profoundly moving. Though the men down there were our enemies, I couldn't hate them, despite all the hatred I felt for the purpose which was using them.

Suddenly I was aware of something moving in the track below us, slowly coming nearer. "Look, you two," I whispered. "If that's a man, we'll take him as he passes under this crest. But I want him alive."

Slowly, very slowly, the blur of darkness in the silver light drew near. Often it paused, turned round as if to admire the moonlit scene — something no 'Takwena ever would do. Then, as the figure came near, indistinct as it was, an odd feeling that I knew it began pounding madly in my heart. Finally, now very close, it started to whistle the first tune taught to me as a child:

Au clair de la lune,
Mon ami Pierrot...

At last the figure stood beneath us. I gave Tickie and Said the sign, and the three of us descended upon him — I at his head and throat, Tickie at his legs and our long Arab at his middle. He went down like a stone without sound or struggle. I made him feel the point of my knife at his throat and whispered in Sindakwena, "One sound and I'll kill you."

As he uttered a muffled "I understand," I signed to Tickie and Said to let him go and ordered him to his feet saying, "Who are you? What are you doing here? Are there more coming? Answer me softly, but at once."

He got up slowly, his back turned to me, while we watched him, our knives shining in our hands. For a moment he remained bent, brushing his neatly pressed tunic and freshly creased slacks. The gesture seemed infuriatingly familiar. Then he turned toward me, saying with the stress of emotion, "John Edmund Cornwallis

Sandysse to the world in general, but to you, Pierre François de Beauvilliers, just John; John at your service."

"My God, John!" I cried. "It can't be you!"

"It's me all right—"

"Are you—we didn't hurt you?" Without pausing for an answer I turned toward the others. "Tickie! Said! See. . . . The bwana I've come to find!"

"Bless you, Pierre—"

"You're sure you're not hurt?"

"No. I heard you coming and fell with you before you hit me," he said, grinning at me. "Bless you, I'm all right. Alone at the moment, too, and . . ." He paused, then added, "It's odd, but I've been thinking of you all day."

"Quick," I whispered urgently, "let's go now before they discover below that you've gone."

"Not so fast, Pierre," he said. "I can't come with you, at least not far. You see, I'm in command of all that down there!" I could hear the bitterness in his voice.

"What?" I exclaimed.

"It's not as bad as it sounds. Only it's a long story. Let's find a place where we can talk in comfort."

"But won't someone come and look for you?" I asked, still dazed by the shock that it should be he who was commanding one end of the long line of evil traffic between the Great Flamingo Water and the heart of Umangoni.

"No, no one will come," he assured me. "You see, for eighteen months now, every night when it's been fine, I've come up here to be alone and to think. They're used to my being away for hours at a time. But first tell me what news of my mother. Of Joan? And what have you done with Kawabuzayo? Why isn't he with you?"

"Kawabuzayo?" I asked, bewildered.

"The man I sent to bring you here." He peered hard at Tickie as if hoping to see the missing man in him. Finding it all impossible of explanation in that place, I took him by the arm and led him back to our camp among the great redwood princes. There we lit a fire, and there I told him, and he told me.



CHAPTER 9

COULD hardly keep my eyes from the face on the other side of the fire. John was as fair as his sister was dark; his brow was broad and firm, and his eyes, set wide apart, were of a singularly warm and shining brown. He stood five feet eleven inches and he was immensely strong, both in body and in spirit. Had it not been for that tide of gray rising in his hair, I'd have thought him no older than when I first met him riding with Joan along the dawn-pink shore of the great False Bay. Then I saw something new which went to my heart: the signs in his face of a trial and a bitterness of experience beyond the understanding of those who have not shared it. Those devils have tortured him into doing this, I told myself, angered and dismayed. But the story was not so simple as that.

It began in December 1944, on the night of the new moon, when he and Serge Bolenkov fled from our prison outside Harbin, not knowing whether I was alive or dead. Ironically, they were picked up by a Russian patrol on the outer Mongolian frontier exactly a fortnight after the Japanese surrender, and were at once suspected of being American spies dropped there by parachute. The Russians refused to believe they could have escaped from Harbin.

Serge thought it would be far better if John did not disclose himself as an officer and a gentleman, but pretended to be a man of the common down-trodden people, with passionate left-wing sympathies. He believed John would have a far better chance of getting back to England that way, for, make no mistake about it, they were in the soup.

So John had ceased to be Colonel Sandysse, D.S.O., M.C., of His Majesty's Fifty-Second African Commando, and became Regimental Sergeant Major George Henry Sydcup of the same unit. He'd chosen the name of Sydcup, he went on to explain,



because he wanted the name of someone whom the War Office knew, in case the Russians started checking up.

At the Russians' base camp they were interrogated skillfully and repeatedly. They were not physically ill-treated. From the start they were given the medical attention and food they needed. But a sleepless, unending suspicion of the West made it impossible for their slant-eyed captors, with their high cheekbones and suet-pudding heads, to accept the account which John and Serge gave of themselves. The minds of those men were permanently in a focus of distrust, created by a generation of isolation and one-sided propaganda. They would have packed the pair off to a forced-labor camp before Moscow even knew of their existence, but for two things.

The first was John's pose as an ardent admirer of Communist doctrine and of Russia. That flattered them and excited their interest. The other was his claim to have served with an African regiment. He still remembered vividly the green light that went up in the eye of the political commissar when he cross-examined him about his unit. Hard on this came a hurried visit from a

bespectacled specialist, flown from Moscow, who had an incredibly detailed knowledge of Africa and who questioned him in fluent Swahili and in Sindakwena.

"Yes, old fellow," John told me, "that strange, bespectacled little bureaucrat nearly knocked me flat with astonishment. He asked me if I'd ever heard of the School of Revolution at Tashkent. When I said no, he explained that for years there had been a school at Tashkent where people like myself, who believed in the Communist gospel, were taught how to disseminate it in other parts of the world. Would I like to join the one hundred and fifty Africans already studying there?"

"A hundred and fifty, John?" I exclaimed.

"There were close on three hundred when I left," he assured me, then went on to say that his bespectacled bureaucrat had promised him that, if he did well at school, he would be given a role with a splendid future in the great plan the Soviet International had for the suffering black millions in Africa.

"This, then, is part of that great plan." I waved my hand in the direction of the valley.

John nodded. He said he liked the proposition in more ways than he had cared to tell, for here was something far greater than a possible line of escape; here was an imperative duty to find out what that plan was and to get intelligence of it out to the world before it was too late. So he told his intellectual Marxist spider that he longed to help free the suffering millions in Africa. He asked only that Serge should be allowed to go with him. The bureaucrat didn't like that; once a White Russian, always a White Russian, he said. How could John expect them to believe he was a friend of the Revolution when he clung to Serge? Once more a Siberian salt mine seemed just around the corner.

There was nothing John and Serge could do except wait and pray. Soon after, they were sent for by the Chief of Staff. The Russians were finally convinced that the story of their escape was true. John was to be sent to Tashkent.

"Did they let Serge go with you?" I asked.

"No," John said, "but they promised to let him go back to Manchuria if I gave them satisfaction."

So there he was in the School of Revolution at Tashkent, learning Marxist claptrap and all the slick, cunning tricks of the agitator and begetter of industrial unrest, the exploiter of the real grievances which we inflict on millions of backward and impoverished peoples with our racial and social arrogance.

The Tashkent school had close on two thousand students, all carefully picked. Its pupils came from all over the world to learn the latest dirty method of spreading chaos and unrest in the mind and machinery of man. John said grimly that he'd done well at the school.

Then, exactly two years ago, he found himself once more face to face with his bespectacled bureaucrat from the Kremlin. Was he still prepared to work for the cause in Africa? John said he was, subject to the condition that Serge be freed and sent back to Manchuria. The man from the Kremlin agreed that if John accomplished a certain mission *successfully,* Serge would be released and helped to return. Then the bureaucrat spread out a map and pointed to the east cc ast of Africa and the Great Flamingo Water. Only John gave it the name it had on the secret Russian map: Otto's Bluff.

"Otto Lindelbaum's bluff! And a bluff in more ways than one," I exclaimed.

"Who is Lindelbaum?" John asked.

"You mean to say you do not know? Do you know Harkov?"

He nodded.

"Lindelbaum's Harkov's boss," I told him. "But go on, I'll explain later."

John said his mission had been brilliantly planned; he was astonished at the imaginative understanding which had realized that the 'Takwena were the one nation sufficiently complex, supple and disciplined to launch an organized revolution in Africa, and which had guessed that they could be won over to the cause of revolution.

"The means may be Russian but the inspiration's not," I said. "It was all Otto Lindelbaum's. Have you in all this heard any talk of a dream?" I was beginning to realize how skillfully the master conspirator worked, how careful he was not to give his

pawns more knowledge than they needed for their own limited moves.

"No, I don't think so. But wait a moment! That's what Kawabuzayo and the others had a row about at Tashkent — a dream. I was going to tell you, only it all seemed so silly."

"I'm afraid it's far from silly. They plan to use the dream. But go on with your story."

He said his bureaucrat explained that Otto's Bluff was a secret harbor known only to Russia. Already it was organized as a first-class base of supply and was prepared to accept its first big shipment of arms and other war stores. That shipment was due to leave in two months, and he ordered John to accompany it to a destination inland. There he was to organize a military base and training depot for the 'Takwena army which in turn was going to liberate Southern Africa on the great day of final disintegration of its white capitalist world. But the rank and file of 'Takwena, those who were not Tashkent-trained, were not told this. They believed they were mobilizing for the English King over the Water, as they had in the last war.

A week after this conversation, five 'Takwena men, all with the marks of royalty on them, arrived at Tashkent for instruction and were put in John's charge. One was Kawabuzayo, a most attractive character, a 'Takwena of the old school, tall, broad, with a manly bearing. He was soon filled with distaste for all he saw and heard at Tashkent. John liked him from the start, and they became friends.

As he finished his description of Kawabuzayo I remembered the dying man in the kitchen at Petit' France.

But there was also one named Ghinza, John continued, a gaunt, grim, leathery fellow, who was ambitious and embittered. He had never forgiven fate for depriving him of the throne by making him the son of a second instead of a first son; and he smarted under the injuries received from a bullying white overseer during a spell in a copper mine.

I remembered the grim face of the 'Takwena at the porthole in the *Star of Truth* and said, "If I'm not mistaken, he's on his way here now with Lindelbaum's final instructions."

"Arrived this morning," John remarked, "with what you call Lindelbaum's instructions, but what I call my marching orders from Moscow."

He told me that Kawabuzayo and Ghinza quarreled continually. One of the rows John overheard was about a dream, and some story of a feather. It seemed trivial at the time.

"John," I interrupted, "this is terribly important. Try and remember everything that was said."

He remembered that Ghinza, in that bitter sarcastic voice of his, was reproaching Kawabuzayo for not telling him what he knew about some test that would validate a dream to be sent by 'Nkulixowe, the great 'Takwena king. Apparently Ghinza knew half of it, and Kawabuzayo the rest, and Ghinza wanted to swap information. But Kawabuzayo refused and berated Ghinza roundly for making a treasonable request. They had both inherited this knowledge from their fathers, he reminded him, and they could speak of it to others only at one time, when properly summoned to do so. Kawabuzayo had gone on to say that Ghinza was far too lax in his talk of 'Takwena dreams; he had overheard him discussing them with Harkov. Ghinza had given a shriek of rage, saying Harkov was a true friend of the 'Takwena, and threatened to kill Kawabuzayo unless he told what he knew. Since John did not know Harkov or anything about 'Takwena dreams at the time, the incident concerned him only as evidence of the deadly incompatibility of the two men.

I told him he'd helped me more than he knew, for clearly his story could only mean that 'Nkulixowe had created, as Oom Pieter and I had suspected, a machinery for checking the authenticity of any great dreams that might be foisted on his people in the troubled future.

Six weeks after the quarrel, John went on, the Kremlin bureaucrat told him to be ready to leave in a week. Kawabuzayo, much to Ghinza's disgust, was to accompany John.

So they set out from Tashkent to Vladivostok, and thence via Singapore and Colombo to East Africa. In harbor they were kept locked under cover, and the slender hope John had had of com-

municating with me or his family quickly vanished. Twenty months ago they had arrived at the Flamingo Water, where they were met by Harkov. Harkov had briefed John arrogantly and sent him off into the interior before boarding the *Star of the East* for Capetown. Two months later John had arrived at this base to find tents already up, four thousand recruits waiting, and a score of picked 'Takwena who'd seen service in the last war to help with the training.

Already he'd trained twenty thousand men and in two months he'd have another four thousand ready. He had all the rifles, machine guns, submachine guns, pistols, ammunition, explosives and saboteurs' gadgets for a protracted campaign, and a landing ground capable of taking the heaviest aircraft. How he would love to show me his ordnance and quartermaster's store in the great system of caves which lined the deep gorge! His mounted infantry were as good, he believed, as any commandos the last war produced. Since he had no choice but to do this sinister work, he'd done it well, he said with an air of forlorn pride. He had felt sure that soon he would be able to get word to me to join him, and once together he'd felt certain we'd be able to deal with the situation as it had to be dealt with. But as the days went by and no opportunity came, he became more and more despondent. Somehow at all costs the plan had to be defeated. Unfortunately his orders forbade him to show his face outside the basin, and there was no one he could trust, except Kawabuzayo, who like himself was a prisoner. And though he couldn't understand it, no stranger, no shepherd even, had ever come wandering over those silky grass slopes.

So desperate had John become that he had laid live charges in the caves on the excuse that this was an elementary precaution in the defense of a military base. He would blow up the whole lot rather than let them be used for the purpose for which they were intended.

However, three months ago, something had happened to give him hope. A strange 'Takwena had shown Kawabuzayo something like a feather and whispered at length in his ear. Kawabuzayo had said sadly afterward that he had to go south to Van

Riebeeck's Bay, where he was to meet Ghinza and come back with him by ship to the Flamingo Water. As he said it, Kawabuzayo shook his head and exclaimed, "I am not I," which I knew was a 'Takwena expression of acute dismay. John couldn't get more out of Kawabuzayo, but he made him promise that he'd go to me, secretly, and direct me up here. He couldn't trust his information to a letter, for if such a letter were found it would be the end of both Kawabuzayo and John and all chances of frustrating the conspiracy. All he could do was to ask Kawabuzayo to give me a verbal message in the full assurance that I, too, was on the right side.

Kawabuzayo's hesitation had vanished the moment he heard my name. He said he had once seen me as a boy, and he even called me "son of the white chief without a country of his own," which is what the 'Takwena called me as a child. So John had written my name and address on an envelope and given it to Kawabuzayo.

That brought him to the morning of this very day, when Ghinza had arrived with sealed orders for him. John was to finish training within a month and be prepared by September 26 to equip on a full fighting scale the army he'd trained. Once mobilization was launched, he was to hand over command to Ghinza and return to the Flamingo Water, where a ship would call for him on October 26. Before sailing, he was to see that the base at the Flamingo Water was destroyed, and it was suggested by his superiors that setting fire to the dense bush would be the most natural way, and the one least likely to attract outside attention. Since he was commanded not to disclose this most secret part of his orders to Ghinza or the others, he realized his masters were plunging the 'Takwena into revolution with a cynical promise of support they had no intention of giving.

What did I think of it all, and what were we to do? Whatever it was, it had to be lightning quick for we had less than a month.

I gave John a summary of my own story from the death of Kawabuzayo in my kitchen and the first coming of the feather into my life. Above all, I stressed my conviction that the 'Takwena were not yet committed fatally to this plot cooked in a foreign pot.

We knew the Umbombulimo was; Ghinza and his close confederates might be. But they were not the whole nation. What of all the peoples traveling through the African bush from far and wide for news of a new great dream? And what of the King of the 'Takwena? Had John forgotten the King, a not unworthy successor to a great father who'd helped us generously in the war? I couldn't imagine his being on Ghinza's side.

No, the King and his people could be united for revolution only if they were convinced it was at the dictates of the dream promised them by 'Nkulixowe. With the lesson of the disaster caused by a false dream only a century ago, they'd not easily be enticed into another concocted by Harkov and the Umbombulimo. Those experienced old royal indunas had, we now knew, a way of checking the dream for authenticity. How it was to be done we didn't know yet, but Kawabuzayo had known and so did Ghinza. If they knew, there must be others, for it was inconceivable that the great King, in a world full of accident and disaster, would have entrusted such vital knowledge to only two men. I was certain that I knew now why Ghinza had killed Kawabuzayo: Kawabuzayo had refused to give him his knowledge out of fear that Ghinza would tell Harkov, who would then advise the Umbombulimo how to dress up the spurious dream in order to pass the test. I saw hope for us in that. Ghinza had failed with Kawabuzayo and had arrived on the scene perhaps too late to discover a substitute for him. These ancient tabus in the minds of the 'Takwena went deep and were not to be uprooted merely for Ghinza's arrogant asking.

What I had to do now was to set off as fast as I could to find Oom Pieter. I felt sure that when I met him he would tell me of others who knew the secret that had died locked in Kawabuzayo's heart. It was August 29 and I had at the most only twenty-eight days.

When I told John of my decision, he came quickly to his feet like a man about to go into action. "Go as fast as you can. I'll hold the fort as before — and expect to see you here, with news good or bad, sometime between now and September twenty-sixth. Good-bye and God bless you."

CHAPTER 10



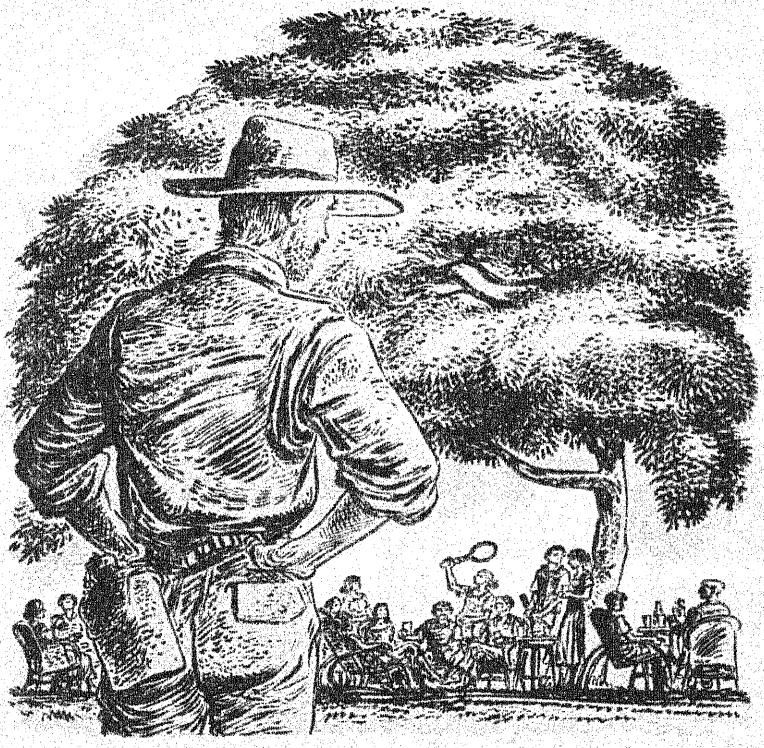
AT FIVE O'CLOCK on the afternoon of August 31, Tickie, Said and I rode into the capital of Umangoni on horses I had hired from friendly farmers in the valleys on the western side of the Mountains of the Night. I say friendly, but they were not cheerful or welcoming. The first thing that struck me, as I traveled toward the capital in the guise of a hunter back from the interior, was how the people had changed. The whole of Umangoni seemed darkly absorbed in some secret.

I saw it in the 'Takwena getting up from his rest in the saffron sun; in the peasant leaning on the arms of his wooden plow behind his great gentle black oxen; in the warrior, well rubbed with lion fat, trotting past us impatient for his courting; in the women in single file like figures on a Greek vase crossing a yellow evening skyline with urns of water on their heads. I believe it was enough for them merely to see a red stranger to start thinking, There goes one who does not know, and who must never know. The whole land was calm before the storm.

All the way to the capital, along the bright-red bridle tracks winding through the long fertile valleys, the feeling accompanied me, right up to the hill where the British Mission stood. There, for a moment, it left me.

We rode through the gate and down the middle of a road, along which, screened by scarlet poinsettia bushes and purple bougainvillaea, rose the white walls of a score or so of official houses. It was a small English island. A fiery Union Jack flew over the gleaming crest of the Mission's offices.

Unfortunately the offices were already closed for the day. Only a serious Basuto radio-telegraphist and a bespectacled Nyassa clerk were there on night duty. Both were new to me — and that, I reflected, was much of the trouble with Africa since the war. Before, people in the administration stayed a lifetime in one



country. Officials knew their districts and their people like the palms of their own hands. But nowadays, the restless authorities seemed to be unable to change their staffs fast enough for their uneasy liking. The head of this Mission, I'd heard, had only recently come from Gambia, and I asked myself bitterly, Would he have any idea of the change in the atmosphere in Umangoni?

"Where," I asked the bespectacled clerk, "would I find the head of the Mission?"

"At his residence, sir," he told me in excellent English. "His Excellency is having an entertainment of games of tennis."

I gave Said and Tickie a note to the Mission storekeeper and went in search of the entertainment of games of tennis.

Even if I'd not known the Residency from its size, I'd have known it from the sound of tennis balls being well hit and smartly returned somewhere on the grounds. Dismounting at an iron gate with a pepper tree bowed over it, I walked toward the sound.

A group of men and women were sitting under a vast flamboyant tree watching the game. Two other men sat apart at a table glittering with cut glass.

A feeling of almost insane dissociation from the reality of Umangoni came over me. This company was simply unaware of the dark invasion striding down upon them. Perhaps these people, marooned far from the life into which they had been born, were entitled to their tennis, but I resented it. In my mind I saw this same scene being enacted all over the vast continent of Africa, where the correct, lovable British formed their own islands.

As I came into view, everyone turned to stare at me with the uninhibited concentration of people for whom the sight of a stranger is a rare event. One of the men at the table exclaimed to the other, "This is truly uncanny, sir. There he is, Pierre de Beauvilliers himself!"

He came quickly to greet me, saying, "I can't tell you how glad I am to see you again, *mon cher* Pierre, but where on earth have you been?" He hesitated, his warm Latin eyes looking me over keenly. "You look like someone who's seen a ghost. Obviously you need a drink, and you'll have one just as soon as you've been introduced to His Excellency."

Aramis, to give him his school nickname, turned to lead me to his host, but I restrained him. "Help me to get these formalities over as soon as possible, and then let's talk alone. It is true I have been in an underworld, as you guessed, and I must return almost at once. But tell me first, is Oom Pieter Le Roux here?"

"No, but he was here ten days ago. His Excellency has a letter in his office from him to you."

I reiterated, "Try and get us away at once. This letter makes it all the more essential."

However, it took us a good hour of my grimly rationed time before we were able to leave. His Excellency's good-bye to me was

charged with polite reproach at my decision to spend the night not at his house but with Aramis.

At last there came the moment when Aramis put me in an easy chair by the fire in his bachelor home, gave me a glass of hot milk and rum, for I was shivering from cold and fatigue, and said in a voice of warm concern, "Drink it up, Pierre, while I go and see to your servants and fetch your letter."

Slowly sipping my drink, I thought of Aramis and my incredible luck in running into him here. The youngest son of one of the most remarkable missionaries France has given to Southern Africa, he was born and bred a British subject in Umangoni. After school and college at the Cape, he had joined the British Mission Extraordinary to Umangoni. He should have been head of the Mission but, not having attended an English university, he had never been considered for the post. The fact that he had qualified many times over in the university of 'Takwena life counted only enough to raise him to a chief secretaryship.

He returned with a letter which was marked "Urgent. Personal. Strictly Confidential."

As I took it Aramis remarked with a frown, "Look, the flap of the envelope is loose. For a letter so marked, your gallant uncle has not sealed it very well. Very odd. Odder still when one remembers that someone wanted His Excellency to open that letter this very morning." As I looked up quickly, he added, "But read it first, and I'll tell it all to you soon enough."

The letter was dated August 21. It read:

My dear Ouboet:

I hope you are as well as I am and have found what you wanted. The spoor I am following is daily getting hotter. I fear I may have aroused the suspicions of some of the trading corporation's brethren who keep coming to my camps at nightfall, asking and receiving hospitality. But I pray daily to God, and with His help I shall not fail. Only I would ask you to come to me as soon as you can. We have no time to lose. The day of the dream is set for sunrise on the morning of September 16, at the People's usual place at Kwadiabosigo. I do not know yet what the dream is to be, but I leave tomorrow to go to the

kraal of the oldest royal induna, the last surviving brother of the late King. He knows the true test for the dream of 'Nkulixowe. I have your cook, 'Mlangeni, with me. I had to send for him, because all my new 'Takwena servants have, no doubt at the instigation of the brethren, suddenly become bewitched. 'Mlangeni says you have a beautiful young lady staying at Petit' France and daily asks me how much cattle and money you paid her father for her. Pray for me as I pray for you, and do not neglect to keep your guns clean and oiled, for we shall, I fear, need them yet. I bid you farewell and Godspeed, Ouboet. Always,

Your loving Oom Pieter

I could read between the lines the weeks of frustration and toil that gallant old man had suffered with unwilling, superstitious bearers and the ever-present danger of Lindelbaum's agents discovering what he was really after. And I was touched by his understanding of my own personal needs, which prompted him to let me know that 'Mlangeni had said Joan was safe at Petit' France. "Who wanted to see this letter?" I asked Aramis.

"A Trans-Uhlalingasonki Trading Corporation representative called Harkov."

"Oh, Lord!" I cried with dismay.

Aramis explained that Harkov had told His Excellency that he had an urgent business proposition for Oom Pieter and me. His Excellency had replied that my uncle had left for an unknown destination. As for me, His Excellency had no idea where I might be, and doubted if Oom Pieter knew, since he had entrusted a letter addressed to me to His Excellency's care.

"A letter!" Harkov had exclaimed with interest. Oom Pieter would no doubt have given his next address in the letter. Would not His Excellency feel justified in opening it?

His Excellency's blood had boiled at the very suggestion, and Harkov hastily admitted that there was nothing to be done except to wait until I turned up. But it was odd, Aramis concluded, that the letter had been opened.

"Harkov opened it," I told him, "and I fear I shan't be able to spend the night with you after all, but will have to leave at once."

"No, Pierre," he protested vehemently, "you're exhausted. As for these servants of yours, you've nearly killed them. I tell you, *mon brave,* it will finish badly if you continue this way. What the devil's it all about? Why this insane haste?"

I said impatiently, "While you all sit sipping whiskies and sodas at tennis parties, the biggest disaster Africa has ever seen is bearing down on you. I can understand your correct, ceremonious boss not knowing it. But you, Aramis, of all people, must be aware of it!"

Instantly his expression changed. "Of course, I realize something is wrong, Pierre. But we're all so chained to our desks these days by the senseless paper work London sends us that it's difficult really to keep in touch with the African people."

He went on to say that he had known something terrible was going on from the moment he had seen me. The look in my eyes had confirmed his own feelings. He had noticed the strange ebb and flow of men between the interior and the capital. There was a general decline in laughter and song, too, and a tour he had made into the interior had increased his uneasiness. Then, when he had returned to learn that the King and all his indunas had left for the summer Capital of the High Place in the mountains two months earlier than usual, he was rather alarmed. Now, I'd thoroughly frightened him, so would I please tell him what it was all about?

On a pledge of secrecy, I told him of the plot, adding that the zero hour for the uprising would be September 26. In view of the distances involved, it would probably take several days before the tidal wave of destruction reached the capital, and some weeks before it swept across the frontiers. But when it did come, I said, it would be on a scale such as Africa had never seen. This was to be a revolution with a difference: a well-trained, well-equipped army with modern firearms inciting fifteen million black to fall on what was left of a bare two million white. We must prevent it at all costs. And that would still be possible until September 16, when the tribes would be committed.

Harkov suspected that Oom Pieter and I were trying to interfere, and he wanted to do away with us. That was why I had to go to

Oom Pieter at once, for we knew how the whole ghastly plot could be foiled by the 'Takwena themselves, without a drop of innocent blood being shed. As long as that chance existed we had to take it. But I could say no more now.

I begged Aramis to speak of this to no one except His Excellency, and advised him, should I fail, to set about evacuating the Mission. I would get word to him by September 19. I also suggested that he telegraph Port Herald to charter the aircraft he would need for evacuation and to hold them at his disposal.

Aramis said His Excellency would never agree to take so expensive a step on his own initiative. His Excellency was terrified of ridicule, and a story like mine, so outside his own ordered experience, would seem to him too farfetched. Before he acted he would most likely institute a ponderous inquiry — might even send Aramis to question the King, which, of course, would be disastrous.

I told him to charter the aircraft at my expense, but I counted on him to see that His Excellency did nothing to precipitate the conspiracy. If no word had reached him from me by September 19, then he must assume the worst, and after that the sooner the outside world was warned the better. And now, would he tell me who and where was the royal induna Oom Pieter had gone to see?

Aramis answered that it must be Kawabuzayo's father, now very old, but a fine and true 'Takwena, living three days away in the southwest. With that I thanked him and concluded that I'd better get back on my horse. But as I stood up I was swaying with fatigue.

Aramis spotted the look of physical defeat at once. Taking my arm, he said, "There now, Pierre, *mon brave,* you've seven hours to dawn. Sleep with a clear conscience. I'll call you at sunrise, and with the best horses and saddles under you you'll soon make up the lost hours. You'll not regret it, I promise you!"

But he was wrong; to this day I regret it.

Aramis worked throughout the night, and when another uplands dawn was leaping in flames along the purple mountains we were sitting outside the Mission's offices on fresh horses, our saddle-

bags charged with good Boer commando rusks, sugar, salt and coffee.

He told me what he had found out while I slept. Harkov had left the capital at two thirty the previous afternoon with an armed escort of five, ostensibly on a tour of the outlying trading posts of his vast corporation. Aramis declared the hour was significant because it coincided with the Mission's siesta and he could no longer doubt that Oom Pieter's letter had been opened and read while the Mission was at food or asleep. He pointed out on a map the route Harkov had taken to the royal induna's kraal, but suggested another route for me. It was more difficult because it followed a dark pass high through the mountains, but in fine weather it was nearly half a day shorter than the other, and it had no trading posts along it.

Then he handed the map to me, saying, "Pierre, I salute you. I cannot believe that the good God who sent you will let you fail. Good-bye, good luck and *à bientôt, mon brave.*"

WE RODE steadily until evening, and as we rode I realized our extreme physical exhaustion. At dusk I asked at a hospitable kraal for news of Oom Pieter and Harkov, giving them the names of Indabaxosikas and Mompara, by which the Africans knew them —"he who speaks as he shoots," and "bullfrog."

At once I had fresh evidence of how quick a service of intelligence the African has in the chain of lonely herders, travelers, hunters, roadside-hut wives, and washerwomen by the fords who sing news to one another all day long from one valley to the other. Oom Pieter, they said, had done an odd thing. Just before sunset, when the food in the pots was ready to be eaten, he had left the kraal of Kawabuzayo's father, taking with him the royal induna and a man called 'Mlangeni. My hopes soared at the news. Oom Pieter had evidently heard of Harkov's coming.

As for Mompara, the bullfrog, my black hosts told me he had been seen riding with seven armed men. So he's collecting reinforcements from his trading posts as he goes, I thought grimly, as I thanked them and crawled into my blankets to sleep.

At twelve o'clock the following day we drew up our horses in

the shadows of a rock to look down on the kraal and ample huts of the royal induna's hamlet. Tickie called out, "Look, Bwana! The cattle are still standing in their kraals. Listen how they call for food and water. What a lazy place!"

Through my glasses I saw the colorful herds packed tight in their stockades and in the middle of the settlement a dark cluster of men gathered under their council tree. A man in the center was addressing them, while the women and children stood at the entrances of their huts anxiously watching their men.

"Tickie, there's been trouble down there," I said. "Ride down and find out what's happened, and if it's all right for us to join you, wave your blanket."

So Tickie descended on the kraal. He had not even dismounted when he waved his scarlet blanket energetically about his head. Deep voices rose up from the kraal to greet me. "Son of a chief without a country, we see you, aye, we see you."

"Old fathers, mothers and children, one and all, I see you and I greet you," I called out warmly to them. "What keeps you talking while your cattle stand hungry in the sun?"

Then they all started telling me at once. It had been bad enough when their wise old induna and Indabaxosikas had left them suddenly the night before because of gossip shouted from the other side of the valley. But this morning, who should ride abruptly into their midst but Mompara and twelve armed men. Yes, twelve, and Mompara was not friendly as when bargaining with them at a trading post, but angry and threatening. Never had they seen such behavior in any man, not even a red man. He was angry because their wise old Father and Indabaxosikas were not there, and because they could not tell Mompara where they had gone.

Who was Mompara to ride into their midst without waiting outside the kraal to be invited, as all men of breeding did? They had gathered under the council tree to consider sending a protest to the King in the Capital of the High Place. What did I think of that?

I assured them that never had I heard of such behavior. But I begged them not to let the matter trouble them. I myself was

looking for Mompara, and also for their wise old Father. I would take Mompara to the Head of the Mission of the King over the Water, and see that he was never again allowed to come back to Umangoni. The great shout of "Agreed!" was one of the most rewarding sounds I've ever heard.

Well, then, I said, would they please tell me, when had Mompara left? How many horses did he have? What was the track like? What sort of country lay ahead?

They promptly answered in corresponding order: As the sun rose; twenty-six fresh horses. The track, they said, led to the high pastures vacated every winter and wound in and out among the mountaintops right to the people's Meeting Place at Kwadiabosigo, seven if not eight days' journey away on horseback. Now would I please stay and have some sour milk or beer of millet freshly made?

I thanked them and said no. Already it was after one. Harkov was seven hours ahead of us. The sooner we turned our backs on the settlement, the better. Its cry of farewell traveled far with us up and out of that secluded valley.

So five more days from dawn to dusk we rode on. Here and there a lonely hunter or odd traveler gave us news of Oom Pieter and Harkov. From what they told us we all appeared to be keeping our distance one from the other. Then on the morning of September 8, when we were within three days of Kwadiabosigo, the even rhythm of our stubborn progress was broken. Just after sunrise, as I pulled up to survey the track ahead through my glasses, I saw a 'Takwena in a red blanket dogtrotting toward us. To my amazement, when I rode out of the shadow of the rock to greet him, he looked as if he were seeing the devil. I believe he would have turned to run, but a few friendly sentences from Tickie and me soon calmed him.

He said he was on a peaceful mission from one distant kraal to another, but there was no peace in these mountains, so he had decided to go home. For, would we believe it, the previous evening for one whole hour he had listened to men shooting at one another. And this morning, not a mile from where he slept, he saw vultures busy near the track, and found, within a circle

of only a few hundred paces, five dead men. So if we would excuse him he wanted to be back in his own kraal before dark.... No, none of the dead men were red, all were black, but please, would I excuse him. And off he went. So, too, did we, and at the gallop.

When we came to the spot, we found the bodies of 'Mlangeni and four of Harkov's 'Takwena fellow travelers. Of Oom Pieter and the royal induna there was no sign. Oom Pieter, wise, good old serpent, had probably escaped in the night with the royal induna and doubled back like a hare, trying to throw Harkov off his spoor.

"Auck, Bwana, *auck,"* Tickie cried as he looked at the body of 'Mlangeni, his kinsman. "Will this evil never end?"

For three more days we twisted and turned in and out of the remote mountain pastures. Every morning we woke to find the spoor had changed direction. Oom Pieter was going one way by day and another by night, presumably determined that he was not going to be driven far away from Kwadiabosigo. I would have been utterly confident of his success against Harkov were it not for the fear of what this constant riding must be doing to his strength. True, he had lived a hard, clean life and was tough, but he was no longer young. Moreover, he had that very old induna with him.

Then at ten a.m. on September 12, with only four more days to go till the day of the dream at Kwadiabosigo, we met a hunter with news. Just after sunrise he had seen two men on horses riding away to the northeast, and they looked like things moving in their sleep. Then, a while back, he had been stopped by a red stranger and eight armed men, also on horses, who questioned him roughly. *Auck,* they were strange, wild men, for no sooner had he told them what he had seen than they set off riding fast into the northeast.

I threw him a brief "Thank you," and whirled about to set off in the same direction.

We rode northeast all morning. Said warned me the horses would be worn out on the morrow. I told him I didn't care about tomorrow. Unless we joined forces with Oom Pieter before dark,

it would be too late. So we rode without mercy, and those Mission mounts responded superbly.

As we approached the top of a long, steep valley in the late afternoon, I halted, listening. I thought I heard the sound of shooting.

"Now listen carefully," I told my companions. "Check the action of your guns; push one in the barrel. Set your safety catches. We're going to ride fast up to the head of the valley, where I think we shall find Mompara."

Barely had we set off when the sound of heavy shooting broke out again. Somewhere in the center of it was the sharp, precise bark of Oom Pieter's Mauser. I knew it far too well to be mistaken. He was alive!

We dismounted quickly and scrambled up toward the head above the neck of the pass. Within three minutes we were crawling carefully over the edge into the long grass on top. Not a sound came up from below us.

But if there were no sound, surely there would be some telltale movement? My eyes instinctively returned over and over again to a large black shadow on our right about three hundred yards away. The shadow appeared to be made by a deep ledge under a vast overhanging rock about halfway up the slope. With the boulders and bushes growing around, it would provide excellent cover and a wide field of fire. I wouldn't be surprised, I thought, if that's where we'll find Oom Pieter. But though I looked and looked, I saw no sign to confirm the thought.

Then a brief glint of something moving, at the highest point on our side of the pass, caught my eye. I trained my glasses on it, and there, a bare hundred and thirty paces away, was a large white man crawling in between two rocks overlooking the ledge. He vanished, leaving only his boots exposed, but brief as that glimpse was I could not be mistaken.

It was Harkov. He was looking down into whatever was underneath that overhanging rock. I dropped the glasses and whispered to Tickie and Said, "Concentrate on the pass below. At the first sign of movement anywhere except on that ledge on our right, shoot as hard and fast as you can."

Then I crawled to a position behind loose rock, where I could get a clear sight of Harkov—for I wasn't going to risk a miss. Another ragged hysterical volley rang out below us, to be broken up by Oom Pieter's calculated shot.

But hard on that, one single shot rang out from Harkov's position; then Tickie and Said opened up. I was looking straight at the back of Harkov, who was propped up on his elbows. The startled jerk upward of his body at that sound of fire into his followers was unmistakable and good to see; good, too, because it made him an even better target. I pulled the trigger and he collapsed onto his face without a tremor. Tickie called out to me, his eyes shining with the light of battle, "Oh, Bwana, look how they run! Help us or some will get away."

Below us, five black men had broken from cover, thrown their rifles away, and were bounding like deer over the boulders. But for me it was all over; no more was necessary. I ordered Tickie and Said to desist: "Mompara is dead. Let them go."

I was wondering, my eyes on that dark ledge, Why doesn't he make a sign? I shouted a loud, "Hullo there! Oom Pieter, hullo!" No answer came, but I refused to accept the worst.

"Said, fetch the horses up as fast as you can. Tickie, come with me. I fear Indabaxosikas must be wounded."

I was wrong. When we arrived he was lying among the gray boulders on the edge of the ledge, his head down between his arms, hands still on the rifle pointing at the crest opposite him. On his left lay his khaki hat with its snakeskin band and swift's feather; on his right, in the shelter of another boulder, were his bag of Magaliesberg tobacco, calabash pipe and matches.

I turned him over gently. There was the hole in his forehead where Harkov's bullet had found him when he raised himself to fire at the man in the pass below. His Napoleon beard was trim and pointed as ever and his features were composed.

Hoping he might have left me some message, I searched his clothing. Behind the band of his hat, carefully tucked out of sight, I found this letter, written on some pages torn out of one of the school exercise books Oom Pieter always used for his records on trek. It was dated Sunset, September 11, and read:

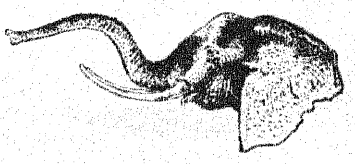
My dear Ouboet:

If you ever read this it will mean I shall have gone to join your mother and father. I have had a long life and I have tried to live it in a way that makes me unafraid of meeting my Maker. Almost I could go gladly, because for years now I have felt a stranger in this new world growing in our beloved African earth. Yes, gladly, did it not mean that I would not see you again, and could never explain that if I failed you it was through no fault of my own. Oh, Ouboet, my spirit is willing but my flesh is weak. I am tired. 'Mlangeni is dead; he died four nights ago when Mompara and twelve others surrounded us and charged my camp just before sundown. We taught him a lesson, but he is still after me, and I can't last much longer. This old induna can hardly stay on his horse any longer. Tomorrow I shall put him on the main track to the place of which you know. I still feel in my bones you will come in time to catch up with him, if not me; but if you do not, he knows what to do. He will do his best if he gets there in time. That's the devil of it, Ouboet; without someone to help him, he may be too feeble to get there. I myself shall lay a false scent for Mompara and lead him away from the induna. I put my trust in God, and His will must be done. Totsiens, Ouboet.

Your loving Oom Pieter

We buried him that day where we had found him — on the spot the 'Takwena now call "the place where he who spoke as he shot speaks and shoots no more."

CHAPTER 11



AT FIVE in the morning of September 16, we were all four of us eating hot porridge beside our campfire. Two days before, we had caught up with the exhausted royal induna, and thanks to a short cut he knew we had camped the evening before within sight and earshot of our final destination. I had sat up late writing letters to Joan, to John, to Bill and to Aramis. I was not despairing,

but the odds against my surviving the day which lay before me were considerable. I need mention only the contents of my letter to Aramis:

1. A request that Tickie and Said be sent to hospital for observation and, if necessary, for treatment against sleeping sickness.
2. A command to fly one of the aircraft chartered at Port Herald with my letter to John at his depot in the basin above the redwood princes. I said that, with Harkov dead, the pilot could pose as a carrier of dispatches from Lindelbaum. He could wait just long enough for John to set the time fuses for blowing up his caves, and then fly him out to safety.
3. My last will and testament, witnessed by Said in an Arabic scrawl and Tickie with a black thumb mark against a bold cross. An ample legacy to Said, a generous one to Tickie, and provision for the families of my murdered servants. I left Petit' France and all else I possessed to Joan.

The bee sound, the urgent droning noise rising up to the stars from the massed 'Takwena clans gathered on the other side of the ridge, kept me perturbed and restless. I ate now as a duty, just as I had eaten and made my men eat before going into action in the war. Tickie and Said, I suspected, felt about it much as I did, but the wise old royal induna, 'Nkulixowe's only surviving brother, ate with the slow relish of a soul long since lifted out of reach of such ignoble fevers as excitement and unrest.

His dark eyes were so dim with age that they were almost purple. I marveled at his calm dignity. My respect for him had steadily grown as we rode together toward Kwadiabosigo, the sacred mountain of the Amangtakwena. Like a stoic he discussed the death of Kawabuzayo, his favorite son. When I told him of Lindelbaum's, Ghinza's and the Umbombulimo's Tashkent-aided plot, he reacted as a great patrician might have done when told of a conspiracy against his city. Oom Pieter had convinced him that it was his duty to see that the dream was properly tested. What I told him turned duty into a crusade. Now his task lay only an hour and a half ahead.

I feared that Ghinza would take drastic steps to silence him. And there was the more subtle and deadly possibility that, even if our old induna got there unhindered by Ghinza, he would not be able to maintain his individual purpose when all around him were fifty thousand of his countrymen united in a mindless identity with their barbaric past.

All night long the music of mass excitement, of tribal hypnotism and herd magnetism had throbbed in the air around us. At times it flamed into fiery, abandoned singing, but mostly it was a deep, excited droning as if all the black honeybees of Africa were swarming. All night long the fifty thousand 'Takwena sat beside their fires, talking, singing, and feeling only one stinging emotion, provoked by the great dream about to be delivered.

I could not let our wise old Father go alone into that excited swarm. Once he was face to face with the Umbombulimo, in whom he had implicit belief, how could he be relied on to maintain a separate identity? How could he stand firm against his High Priest?

Clearly I must go with him. Should he fail to convince his countrymen, only I had the command of language to try and talk them out of believing the false dream. But would I be allowed to speak, I asked the old induna. Perhaps, he nodded, if he vouched for me; for was he not the King's uncle, and was I not known to them all of old?

I am afraid I didn't share his confidence. On a morning such as this, what could be more dangerously provocative than the face of one white man among fifty thousand black? I had no illusion as to the risk I was running. I could only put my trust in the truth of the purpose which had brought me there. Yet as I stood up, my knees were weak under me.

"Now let's get this clear," I said to Tickie and Said. "In twenty minutes the old Father and I are going to ride into the Meeting Place of the People. You, Said, will accompany us to the top of the ridge. Put yourself and your horse in cover among the big boulders and watch the meeting through my glasses, never taking your eyes off me and this old Father. If you see us killed or captured you must jump on your horse, collect Tickie and

hasten back to the British Mission with the letters I'll give you. The chief secretary will reward you and send you back to your home.

"You, Tickie, will take our spare horses down to the ford where there's a deep pool. Swim the horses and let them roll in the sand to their hearts' content. It will refresh them — and that may make the difference between life and death today. Then load and saddle them and be ready to gallop off the moment Said joins you."

I handed Said the letters and said, "Very well then. We'll be off."

We lifted our royal old induna onto his horse. Tickie gave us the salute of his people, turned quickly and marched off with a long, disconsolate stride. But he had gone only a pace or two when he stopped abruptly, listening.

The droning, bee-swarming noise had suddenly vanished, and silence had fallen like a black cloak over the upsurging dawn. I knew that this was the hush which descends upon a crowded theater when the curtain is being raised on the first act.

I had already discussed with the old induna how best to time our entry on the scene. We had agreed that it was dangerous to arrive too early, when the gathering was loose and flexible enough to permit Ghinza or his allies to attack us. The best moment would be when the gathering was united under one central authority. That would be when the King and his indunas took their seats on the high ground below the cave from which the Umbombulimo would issue at sunrise to proclaim the dream. Now, judging by the sudden silence, that moment had come.

We rode straight for the neck of the pass, where we left Said, wound down a corridor of pearly rock and came to a halt on the rim of the basin.

It was the first time I had seen Kwadiabosigo. Its name means "Spear of the Morning" and it soars two thousand feet above the rim of the basin. The sun was just beginning to strike sparks out of its glowing point. Below it was a deep rent in the steely rock surface, the sacred cave. Right under us was the grass-covered bowl itself, and about a mile from where we sat was the deep volcanic rift in the basin which had figured so often in the final

act of the country's most tragic legends and episodes. This crack opened opposite the cave, and cut in a sharp, zigzag fashion through the center of the basin. Countless 'Takwena found guilty of treachery had been condemned by the High Court to throw themselves over its edge. I could see a curious underworld mist curl in a surly wisp or two over some of the saw-toothed edges. Even from where we were, the sight of that cataclysmic cleft in the earth made my senses reel. Quickly I looked away.

Then I saw the fifty thousand clansmen, each clan with its own blanket, specific design of texture and pattern of color, silently converging on the open ground below the cave.

The old induna said with an odd huskiness in his voice, "When the sun reaches the mouth of the cave, the Umbombulimo will emerge and the dream will be told. We must go now."

Fortunately, the clatter of our horses' hoofs was drowned in a deafening outbreak of new sound as we started down the track. It was one of the most exciting sounds I know, the sound of jubilation and praise the 'Takwena women make at the top of their throats and against their palates—a wonderful trilling, silvery sound, ringing out in clear waves.

Dear God, I thought, what hope for reason with so much emotion already about?

We had come unobserved to within three hundred paces of the edge of the gathering when, abruptly, the sound vanished and, in the silence that followed, the sound of our horses' hoofs rang out sharply.

At once the 'Takwena were on their feet, staring with amazement at us. As far as I could see, there was not one person, including the King and his circle of indunas sitting on their mats of leopard skins just below the entrance of the cave, who had not instantly whirled about. What *one* did, all fifty thousand had to do. And how was I to break that up?

I pulled up my horse and beckoned the old induna to pass me. Slowly he put his horse between me and the crowd, and halted. The people stood there staring at us in a strange, unbelieving way. I looked about me as if it might be my last sight of that lovely day, of the sky so serene and impervious to all the suspended

frenzy about us. In the mouth of the cave, something — I couldn't tell what — appeared to move abruptly into a watchful, waiting position.

At last the King spoke, and a chain of loud voices roared his question at us: "Who comes here so rudely at this late moment?"

"'Nkulixowe's brother, great-uncle of the King and oldest of his indunas, and the nature of his business with the dream must excuse the lateness of his coming," the old Father replied. Instantly there was a violent movement among the people closest to the King, and I had no doubt a furious protest was being lodged against the royal induna's admission to the gathering.

I rode up to him and said, "Ride on, old Father. You know they have no right to keep you from the meeting."

Another shout went up from the King's end of the gathering. "Halt!" it said. "Halt and await the King's decision!"

The old Father replied with spirit, "Since when has the oldest induna in the land had to wait on a decision to attend a gathering of the people which it is his duty and his right to attend? What strange new custom is this, you men of Umangoni?"

"Well done, old Father," I said, listening to the murmur of approval wrung from the crowd whose only law was tribal custom. "Now, ride hard at them."

I lashed his horse so smartly that it went off at a gallop straight for the crowd, with me following close behind. The tribesmen, seeing the horses coming at them, opened up a narrow lane for us.

Up to that moment, thanks to the deep sun tan on my face and to a blanket of Tickie's which I had wrapped around me, they had remained unaware that the induna's companion was a red stranger. But as we approached the King and I dismounted to lift my old induna from his horse, an angry murmuring was running like a grass fire through the gathering.

The King, with Ghinza and other indunas beside him, ignored the military salute I gave him. He said coldly to his uncle, who was kissing the ground at his feet, "You may have the right to attend, Uncle, but you know it is treachery to bring a stranger, above all, a red stranger, to this gathering." A growl of angry approval greeted his words.

Speaking with a ring of authority I never knew I possessed, I said loudly, "You go too fast, King of the High Place. Since when does a descendant of Xilixowe judge before he has heard the cause? If this is treachery, it is a small misdeed compared with the great betrayal in your midst." And here I looked hard at Ghinza, who was staring at me with anger and bewilderment. I added, "Besides, I am not a stranger! Have you forgotten me and the days when you hunted elephant with my father, the chief without a country?"

At once a new clamor went up from the crowd, and everywhere those who knew of me hastened to explain to the others who and what I was.

Then the King, all anger gone, spoke to me with an air of tragic decisiveness. "Your knowledge of us, son of the chief without a country, is all the more cause why you should have known better than to come to a meeting which is only for the Amangtakwena. I may know you, but the occasion certainly knows you not."

"All the more cause why I had to come," I said. "Could I stand by indifferently while others prepared disaster for your people? Ask your uncle, this wise old Father; I am here only because without me he could not have come. And in a few minutes a dream even more false than the dream which nearly wiped out the Amangtakwena a hundred years ago would have been forced on you."

But I got no further. Ghinza jumped to the side of the King and, pointing at the royal induna still respectfully waiting for permission to rise, cried out, "Have you not heard enough? What further proof of this old man's treachery do you want, cousin? He has told this red stranger of the dream. There is only one answer to that: throw them over the cliff!"

A wordless howl of approval rose from some elements of the crowd, but others were silent.

I said loudly, "Ghinza! Look at me!" With a start he turned to face me. "Yes, look at me, because you have seen me before." Bewilderment appeared in that tight, cold and ambitious face. "Yes, you saw me some weeks ago, from behind a curtain on the deck of the *Star of Truth* in Port Natal. Yes, I see you recognize

me now! I know all about you and your Tashkent treachery!"

Ghinza was gray now, not with fear, for I don't believe he knew the meaning of the word, but with a demonic rage. I turned to the King. "Your cousin Ghinza, who speaks of this wise old induna's treachery, has betrayed the dream not to one but to thousands of red strangers. I have followed him for weeks from the night he murdered this old Father's son, Kawabuzayo."

"A lie! All lies! Over the cliff with them," Ghinza cried out. But this time the crowd was silent.

"If I lie," I challenged him, "then where is Kawabuzayo, who went to meet you and who had a connection with the dream as important as yours? Why is he not here?"

"Because he sent a substitute," Ghinza shouted, his eyes fixed desperately on the mouth of the cave.

"This old Father will soon show you how false a substitute," I answered, bending down impulsively and, without the King's permission, raising the old induna to his feet and showing him to the crowd. "He knows Kawabuzayo was murdered by Ghinza and died in my house because he would not agree to betray the secret of 'Nkulixowe's dream test."

One of the King's indunas suddenly stepped forward and said, "Let the red stranger speak to the end."

"Cousin, I swear to you in 'Nkulixowe's name it is all lies," Ghinza said to the King with angry intensity. "Do you think the Umbombulimo would betray the people's memory? Ask the Umbombulimo!"

The thrust went home. There was a deep murmur of agreement from the crowd.

"I tell you it is true," I countered quickly. "And the truth of it can be proved, oh King, not by me or by this traitor Ghinza, but by the secret test 'Nkulixowe provided. That is why I brought the oldest of your indunas here: to see that 'Nkulixowe's measure of the dream was truly applied. Put it to the test, oh King! If the dream is false you know what to do. If it is true, I will take this old Father by the hand and walk with him over the cliff. As proof of my good word, I give you this." With that I unslung my gun and put it on the ground in front of the King.